Scratching the Shiny Surface of New Workplaces: A Note on Methodology

Keith Townsend
Queensland University of Technology

When organisations invest in new plants there is commonly a commitment to managerially constructed workplace cultures. This makes the investigating of employee resistance in new worksites more complicated. This article explores the processes of an ethnographic research project that aimed to uncover employee resistance in a greenfield worksite. Performing ethnography allowed the researcher to 'scratch below' the shiny surface of the new workplace to uncover interesting patterns of resistance and cooperation in this workplace.

INTRODUCTION

There is a significant body of literature that argues convincingly that ethnographic research methods are essential for uncovering the reality of actions often considered deviant by the organisational hierarchy and indeed by many workers (see for example: Yin, 1994; Neumann, 2000; Friedmann and McDaniel, 1998). By actively becoming involved in the daily routine of the employee, the researcher can more fully understand the context in which certain actions take place. This article provides an analysis of the developing relationships throughout an ethnographic research project, and an analysis of how the approach influenced the data obtained. The research was an attempt to look at new workplaces and consider the presence of resistance and misbehaviour within work teams. This article suggests that even within a workplace that is brand new and present a managerially constructed 'monoculture', below the shiny new surfaces lays important acts of resistance.

It is well acknowledged that time in the field is essential in ethnographic research. This is particularly the case in this new workplace. As a greenfield site, the management had invested much in developing a particular workplace culture. When this researcher entered the field, employees were initially on best behaviour, toeing the corporate line. However, the patience of the ethnographer and the luck of being in the right place at the right time allowed interesting data to be obtained.

This article is presented in four sections. The first section provides a review of some highlights within the literature regarding employee resistance and misbehaviour along with the theoretical underpinning of this research. Then, this article will explore issues that were salient to negotiating access to the research site and entering the field for data collection. This is followed by descriptions of the case study organisation, *GreenFoods* including the worksite. Finally, this article will describe the events as they developed, and research findings.

COVERT RESISTANCE AND WORKPLACE MISBEHAVIOUR

When one considers the wealth of literature that has been published in the area of covert resistance and employee misbehaviour in the workplace, there have been some fabulous insights into the hidden world of work. Roy spent eleven months in a Chicago machine shop and detailed the shopfloor relationships between employees as they constantly negotiated and renegotiated the wage/effort bargain and challenged managerial staff under a piece-rate system (Roy, 1952; Roy, 1954). In a superb coincidence, Michael Burawoy performed his doctoral research in the same Chicago machine shop. Burawoy details this chance occurrence throughout the 1979 publication *Manufacturing Consent*. The result is a historical-comparative case study examining (among other things) fiddles and underworking in the workplace. The focus of much of this work is the manner in which employees take advantage of the time and effort expectations that management have of their workers (Burawoy, 1979). Through an ethnographic case study within a bakery, Ditton's contribution included a development of our understanding of the differences between 'perks, pilfering and theft' within the workplace (Ditton, 1976).

Ethnographic case studies investigating misbehaviour in the workplace fell from vogue somewhat prior to an impassioned plea by Thompson and Ackroyd in their article entitle *All Quiet on the Workplace Front?* (1995). This article was published in response to a theoretical add-on to labour process theory that suggested that workplace resistance was disappearing under the panoptic gaze of electronic surveillance in the workplace, along with other control regimes such as teams in the workplace and unitarist, managerially manipulated corporate cultures (see for examples: Fernie and Metcalf, 1998; Sewell, 1998; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; Barker, 1993; Willmott, 1993).

The development of post-bureaucratic control regimes is something that Edwards predicted in the 1970s. Edwards (1979) suggested that a variety of control regimes had developed and that each mode of control represents an ideal type that rises to prominence as a potential solution to the perceived shortcomings of the previous mode. Importantly, modes of control develop without necessarily replacing their forerunner entirely. Moreover, modes of control can be supportive, and indeed co-exist in the same organisation. Empirical evidence suggests that the burgeoning call centre industry represents clear examples of multiple modes of control coexisting and supporting to assist management's primary goal of a profitable business venture.

Debate surrounding the success of control in call centres falls into two distinct categories. At one end of the spectrum there are scholars who see technological advances as key in a panoptic control (for example: Fernie and Metcalf, 1998; Sewell, 1998; Richardson, Belt and Marshal, 2000) – where actual observation is less important than is the illusion of observation. That is to say, that management does not need to be watching employees all the time, it is good enough for employees to think that the managers 'might' be watching.

Added to this, the coercive nature of the peer control seen in teams contributes to an amalgam of separate controls to develop. This amalgam of control has been referred to as 'chimerical' – named after the beast of Greek mythology that had a lion's head, a goat's body and a serpent's tail (Sewell, 1998). This chimerical control allows both the vertical control of employees by management through electronic surveillance and traditional bureaucratic and technological methods of control with the added horizontal control obtained through the utilisation of a 'team' structure. Employees are expected to maintain levels of output for themselves and use peer pressure to influence the level of output for their team members in a positive manner. Certainly, according to Sewell, this form of control is not limited to call centres, although call centres do represent the greatest potential for such a regime to exist and flourish.

However, not all scholars are willing to accept this thesis (see for example: Callaghan and Thompson, 2001; Bain and Taylor, 2000; van den Broek, 2002; Thompson, 2003; van den Broek, Callaghan and Thompson, 2002). Thompson and Ackroyd held more faith in the ability and sometimes necessity, of employees to undermine some managerial decisions in an attempt to regain control over the labour process. Thompson and Ackroyd go further to highlight the absence of workplace misbehaviour and resistance within managerial focussed organisational behaviour literature with the 1999 publication 'Organisational *Mis*-Behaviour'.

One consequence of this debate was renewed interest and renewed vigour into investigating workplace resistance. However, much of the research is performed in the burgeoning call centre industry (van den Broek, 2004; Lankshear, Cook, Mason, Coates and Button, 2001; Taylor and Bain, 1999; Townsend, 2005). Employees have always found space to resist managerial controls although it appears many of the spaces are becoming colonised by technological surveillance, peer surveillance and a culture of commitment. Nevertheless, a number of employees still find space for resistance as they deem it appropriate. This article suggests the cliché 'the more things change, the more they stay as they are' seems appropriate when investigating resistance in new workplaces. The buildings may be newer, the equipment may be more technologically advanced, and the managerial approach may aim to instil commitment rather than coerce compliance. However, there is nothing particularly new about employee resistance or the specific acts of resistance. The managerial controls within this new workplace means the resistance has to colonise different spaces.

It is well established that employees will resist managerial controls in the workplace. There is a long history of literature discussing employee resistance in various contexts. In addition to previously mentioned studies there has been investigations into resistance within a diverse range of industries, some examples include: auto-manufacturing (Beynon, 1973); garment manufacturing (Cunnison, 1966); call centres (Knights and McCabe, 2000; van den Broek, 2002; Bain and Taylor, 2000; Barnes, 2004); banking (Smith, 1990); leisure services (Townsend, 2003). However, there is limited consideration of resistance within the specific context of 'new' or 'greenfield' workplaces. Indeed, much of the recent literature into greenfield workplaces considers the managerial strategy of de-unionising as a form

of managerial control and hence, limiting employee resistance (Baird, 2000; Leopold and Hallier, 1997).

In addition to limiting union involvement, the use of teams and establishing managerial determined monocultures is aimed at two important outcomes. Firstly, generating an increased level of employee actions that are positive for the organisation, and secondly, limiting employee resistance. Teams are often introduced to develop cooperative work practices between employees. It is commonly reported that when organisations undergo changes to a team-based structure the management will often face resistance to this change (Lloyd and Newell, 2000; Whybrow and Parker, 2000). But what sort of resistance, if any, exists in workplaces that are new? When organisations have a clean slate to start their production, it seems logical that the traditional spaces for resistance will be limited under new managerial ideologies and practices.

The managers of this new organisation went to great lengths to introduce teams and develop a monoculture of cooperation and commitment amongst the workers. Any employee resistance that might be uncovered would not be resistance to a *change to teams* as is often referred to in published literature (Lloyd and Newell, 2000; Martinez Lucio, Jenkins and Noon, 2000). Rather, any resistance would be when workers are employed into an existing and developing team structure. This represents a resistance that fits typically within a labour process analysis, *resistance to managerial control* (Burawoy, 1979; Edwards, 1979). Importantly, this is two very different manifestations of resistance. The first description is primarily considered as resistance to a workplace change program where employees feel alienated by a change from the status quo. The latter description is an acknowledgement of structural resistance within capitalism. As the balance of power is inherently in favour of the institution (the management of the organisation), a common response for employees is to determine overt or covert means of shifting the balance of power back towards themselves (Hyman, 1975). Hence, by removing the variable of contention over a change to team structures, this research is able to investigate resistance to managerial controls while employees are organised in work teams. The greenfield worksite chosen for this study is a food processing plant referred to throughout this article as GreenFoods.

NEGOTIATING AND ENTERING THE FIELD

Part of the ethnographer's quest is to not just uncover stories, but to find the 'unexpected stories' (Behar, 2003: 16). Only with ethnographic studies is a researcher in a position to consider the context studied, contemplate the difference between stated policy and actual practice and then combine this knowledge with worker responses in an attempt to understand all the consequences for all those involved (Whipp, 1998; Friedmann and McDaniel, 1998). The revelation of hidden features, such as the contrast between policy and practice is a strong advantage of the in-depth examination possible with ethnography (Scott, 1994). However, this type of methodology presents practical difficulties. Ethnography does take a commitment

of time and certainly the workload pressures facing researchers in Australia (and probably elsewhere) cannot be underestimated as a deterrent.

The GreenFoods case study site was selected on the basis of two main criteria. Firstly, the company was a greenfield site, having been in operation for approximately one year when negotiation for access began. Secondly, the management team within this workplace had committed to developing self-managing work teams, one aspect of the control debate.

Managers may not like to think about their employees stealing, avoiding work or engaging in other acts of resistance. This may even be more so when the organisation invests such a substantial amount of resources in developing commitment from their employees. Entry and acceptance into an organisation is critical in designing a research project (Bryman, 1988), and largely dependent on the goodwill of managers. Given this, negotiations centred around the researcher investigating the team structure and 'they way employees cooperate, or alternatively, don't cooperate while in their teams'.

Negotiating access to sites can be an ethical bind for ethnographers researching employee resistance; the need to be less than truthful to investigate an alternate truth in workplaces. While an ethnographer attempts to remain objective and independent of influence, maintaining good relationships with the management of organisations is critical. This can lead to a perception by employees that the researcher is present as little more than a 'management informer'. Indeed, when investigating misbehaviour and covert forms of industrial action, trust must be developed with the employees and to be viewed as a managerial informer would create a potentially impenetrable barrier to quality data collection.

According to Katz (2002), an ethnographer's initial emphasis on data collection produces a wealth of descriptions. This was certainly the case in this project. Initial trips to the case study site were little more than opportunities for background data collection describing the physical environment and providing introductions to workers to explain the researcher's presence in the workplace. Little more than descriptive data was collected about the workplace and names of employees were recorded in an attempt to improve personal relationships between the researcher and the subjects. As time progressed, more data was collected on the central issues relating to this research: resistance within, and between the teams.

Visits to the workplace were made on a weekly basis, sometimes twice weekly depending on opportunity. Field trips would last for approximately five hours at a time. In another attempt to increase the level of trust with employees, wherever possible the researcher would engage in the work processes with the employees. This level of involvement is referred to 'moderate participation' where a balance is maintained between being an insider and outsider, participation and observation (Spradley, 1980). Such activities could include placing chicken fillets or salmon fillets on a grill, pouring bags of pasta into a cooking vat, placing ingredients into a near-completed meal and stacking boxes of frozen meals.

Indeed this decision to become engaged in activities with the employees was greeted positively with many employees passing comments like: 'Good to see you're not afraid to get you hands dirty.' Consequently, the benefits of participant observation was that the employees felt more comfortable with the researcher's presence as it was less like they were being 'watched' and the researcher was able to get a much better appreciation of the work that was performed. This approach enabled a better appreciation of more sensitive issues of resistance and misbehaviour.

It is essential that the analysis of ethnographic data is rigorous to avoid taking single comments as a 'truth' and to balance the views of the organisation as presented by managers with what other sources of data (employees, unions, job observation) are presenting. Hence, a computer program (NVivo) was utilised. NVivo is a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) which allowed the development of patterns and emerging themes to be further explored. Furthermore, where actions of resistance and misbehaviour in particular were uncovered, comments and views were substantiated by other sources. This was either through developing patterns of similar comments or alternatively, through explicitly asking other informants to verify facts.

Initially, background information was obtained through interviews with managers. This was followed by six months of weekly visits to the workplace. Each visit lasted between four and six hours. Approximately two thirds of this time was spent developing relationships with employees and talking about their lives at work. The other one third of the time was spent finding quiet places in the workplace to scribble some field notes in a notepad, for example, valuable quotes, people's names or areas to investigate further. In an effort to maintain the illusion of casual interest, notes would never be taken while speaking to people, and rarely were notes taken in the employees' canteen. As a result, there were many notes taken while sitting in rarely used stairwells, empty offices, perched on a toilet and in storage freezers kept well below zero degrees – short notes were recorded in the freezers.

After leaving the workplace, the field notes would be developed and expanded. The notes taken while in the workplace would be used as reminders of conversations and examples of interesting employee activities. This process would take approximately an hour. Each evening hand written hand field notes would be transferred to the CAQDAS. In essence, this provided three opportunities on the day of the field visit to ensure complete and detailed field notes were recorded. This vigilance means that when quotes are presented that may be three or four sentences long, there is confidence that the quote is accurate.

THE GREENFOODS SITE

This worksite was designed with the basic premise of a flow-shop. Some benefits of such a design include the efficient use of space and constant processing times (Meredith and Shafer, 2002). Another key factor in the plant design was that the

organisation would be utilising a JIT production system. The JIT system was pioneered within Toyota motors, with the idea that components are delivered in precise quantities and at the exact time that they are needed in the production process. Tight quality control is essential with this style of system, as defective or insufficient parts immediately disrupt production (Turnbull, 1998; Benders and Van Hootegem, 2000).

The worksite plan ensured a single level plant with an open plan structure to ensure all physical barriers were removed as far as practically possible while still ensuring the safety and integrity of the cooking and storage processes. All processes followed a natural flow, with fresh goods arriving at the eastern side of the plant and storage facilities immediately beside the docks. The goods progressed through the stages of preparation through to packaging, storage and dispatching on the far western side of the plant. Ideally for management, there was no requirement for most employees to be going further than ten to twenty metres for all the equipment they require, regardless of the section in which they work. Management wanted a plant design that would provide efficient use of potentially productive time, and as a consequence (though not acknowledged by management), limit employee resistance through the (re)appropriation of time (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999). A plant layout where employees are not required to move far from their workspace would limit the possibility of employee 'loafing' and potentially avoid the temptation of employee 'theft of time'.

This worksite can be divided into three main areas. The first is the non-food preparation area of the plant. This area includes administrative workspaces, canteen, and changing areas and amenities. Secondly, there is the 'low-risk' area of the building, so named because of the low level of risk in contaminating the food products. While food safety standards require any food contamination to be avoided, any minor contamination would remain non-problematic as the food was still to be cooked (or alternatively, already packaged and frozen). The low-risk area includes the thermal processing area (cooking) and the frozen meal packaging area. Low risk rooms are painted green and employees are required to wear green uniforms and hairnets in this area.

The final main area of the processing plant is the 'high-risk' area, where food contamination through poor hygiene or work practices is more likely, and potentially very dangerous. This area includes the catchment area where food is removed from the cookers in the 'low-risk' area, and the assembly area, where cooked ingredients are assembled into the individual containers and sent through the freezing process. Importantly, the processes in this section are driven by either the technology or upstream processes. This provides the teams that work upstream in the process with comparatively higher power due to their ability to control the flow of production. The high-risk area is painted red with red uniforms and hairnets and when considered with the work processes required in this area, is commonly referred to as the 'hell-pit'.

The labour processes in this plant reflect much of the literature that criticises the notion of teams in the workplace (Parker and Slaughter, 1988; Rinehart, Huxley and Robertson, 1997). The production line of the 'hell-pit' remains a linear process with each employee at a single station. As such, there is no real 'teamwork' rather, what Sharpe refers to as sequential interdependency (Sharpe, 2002). However, there is a little more flexibility allowed in the green section of the plant with employees having greater 'off-task time' to assist each other with time consuming processes. This quote from Rinehart et al describing the teams at a car manufacturing plant in Canada could just as easily explain the teams at GreenFoods:

> 'We found nothing in the lean production work process that necessitated teams. They were not technically required but a product of social engineering. Nearly all operations in the plant could be done without a team' (Rinehart et al., 1997: 344)

DATA COLLECTION AT GREENFOODS

Uncovering resistance and misbehaviour involved its own set of problems at the food processing plant. This plant was a 'very green' greenfield site having just completed its first year of production at the time of the research. While initially it was unknown to the researcher, a key motivation when developing this greenfield site was union avoidance. As a means to achieving this goal, a major effort was in place to develop a corporate culture that revolved around the notion of employee and task equality. In addition, there was a strong focus on the development of a dual system of teams; a series of work teams at one level; and the more holistic team as a sense of collective spirit (Ohno, 1988). Hence, with a researcher in their midst, operators were on best behaviour and very positive when speaking of the organisation.

While the management team appeared to see a researcher's presence as an opportunity for them to learn more about their employees, access was not unconditional. Certainly there was no hostility or barricades to speaking to employees or limitations to the opportunity to roam freely around the plant. However, there was no access to corporate documents and managerial staff were asked to be informed of the researcher's presence days in advance. Not unrealistic expectations; however, further unrestricted access would have undoubtedly resulted in more rich findings.

As a matter of course, operators were asked about their relationships with managers and team leaders. One operator in particular commented: 'The team leader is good, really friendly, that might be to do with the tests we take when we start. Almost everyone here is very friendly' (30 January 2003). Months later, fortuitous timing meant that the researcher's arrival on the shopfloor coincided with this operator completing a conversation with the same team leader. When asked how things were the operator looked at me with a decidedly unhappy expression and exclaimed: 'He's a wanker. He's a pain-in-the-arse, fucking wanker' (24 April 2003).

While taken aback slightly, this proved to be an opportunity to delve further. The operator was asked: 'So, you lot have been telling me for months that this is such a happy place, and 'we all get treated so well here' but that's not really the truth. Why have people been telling me that?' Her response was forthright and only partially surprising given the trust required when researching deviancy. The operator replied:

> 'They've all been lying to you, of course. This is a shithole of a place and I'm tired of lying about it. If you want to really know what people think of this place, I'm about to have morning tea, come out with me and spend some time with the 'gutter scum''.

As it transpires the 'gutter scum' is a term of endearment or collectivity that many of the smokers use to describe themselves as the worksite is non-smoking and they must leave the worksite altogether for a cigarette. Progressively through the day there is a procession of employees heading out to a street beside the plant, to sit in the gutter and smoke cigarettes, drink caffeine in a variety of forms (coffee, tea, or an array of colas) and, most importantly for this research, complain about management and the organisation. Interestingly, it seems that the researcher's presence amongst the gutter scum did not meet total approval. The operator was subsequently berated by some of the other 'gutter scum' for inviting me to join them. Nevertheless, entrance into the circle of discontent had been made and this presented a wealth of data in its own right. Similar to the 'gossip-circle' described by Cunnison (1966: 163), within the protected confines of the like-minded gutter-scum employees spoke freely about conflicts with team leaders and co-workers, long tea breaks, hiding instead of working and other activities that are central to this research. While this researcher does not smoke, the habit has been investigated as a positive research technique elsewhere (Reference to be added post review).

One of the most interesting aspects of becoming involved in taking breaks with the 'gutter scum' was the different conversations people were willing to engage in whilst outside the boundaries of the workplace, yet still with colleagues. Many employees commented about their unwillingness to speak freely within the workplace, yet were more comfortable to do so outside the fence line. In this area, free from the emotional labour associated with the corporate monoculture, employees would vent their frustrations with company policies, with particular team leaders and management as a whole. Within the workplace, the company line of a positive, cooperative culture remained, with subtle reflections of discontent rarely apparent. Importantly, the researcher's 'outsider' membership to this particular group meant that much data could be collected and then used within the workplace to gather further information.

Management were well aware of the problems that were associated with having a group of alienated employees gathering outside the workplace on a regular basis throughout the day. Not only did it portray an image of the organisation's employees that the management was keen to hide, but it allowed discontent

amongst employees to gather momentum. When asked about the smoking employees one manager replied:

> 'It's a problem. I'm not sure what we can do at this stage, but it's a problem. They get out there and if someone has had a bad day they all get involved and then after lunch it can be a nightmare in here. We've got to do something, but we don't know what to do, just yet.'

The managers realised that the gutter scum presented a challenge to their culture and were at a loss to formulate a plan to colonise this area of resistance. Although this group convened throughout the working day, their place of meeting was outside the workplace. None of the managerial staff smoked, so that was not a legitimate possibility to infiltrate this area. While employees were unwilling to engage in overt acts of resistance within the 'Big Brother' style of organisational culture, they drew comfort from knowing that they were part of a silent, underground resistance.

It was after the initial entry to the 'gutter scum' that more data that was central to the research problem came to light. While it was not necessarily the 'gutter scum' to provide this data, it was the recognition and knowledge of dissatisfaction that had previously been hidden that allowed issues to be discussed with other staff members. Importantly, discussions about conflict, misbehaviour and resistance could be addressed with the knowledge that it occurred and without threatening the employee's fear of being the person to initiate such conversation.

A range of issues were uncovered through this process of accessing (while not completing 'joining') the 'inner circle' of discontent. These issues include an ongoing conflict between a small number of operators and one team leader. The culmination of this ongoing conflict was the 'threat' of mass resignations. The researcher was able to explore in much greater depth the politics behind disputes around excluding the union as a bargaining agent. Furthermore, while many managerial focussed handbooks might aim to convince us the managers and supervisors staff are dedicated and committed to the organisation above all else in their lives, supporting previous research by Smith (1990) and Townsend (2003) team leaders and supervisors would actively engage in work minimisation strategies and other forms of resistance. Gaining access to what the workers are 'really' talking about and thinking is an essential part of the ethnographic research project.

While assisting an operator pour some bags of pasta into the cooker one day conversation uncovered an act of resistance with which the researcher had unknowingly become involved. The process of cooking pasta takes approximately twenty minutes, and the team leader told the operator that a batch was required in five minutes. The operator suggests that such occurrences 'piss (her) off' (18 June 2003) and enlisted the researcher's assistance to engage in an act of resistance. The operator told how slowing production would mean that any 'down-time' for the other section would be costed back to the cooking team. Hence:

> '…it may be petty or vindictive but I reckon I'm within my rights to do something to make myself feel better… I've (fed) so much friggin' penne (pasta) into the cooker that they'll have so much they don't know what to do with it. That gives me extra time on my hands and I can relax a little while they sweat trying to find places to store the penne.' (10 May 2003)

After approximately four months of data collection in this workplace there was a breakthrough and some substantial levels of dissatisfaction had been uncovered and it was only weeks later that the researcher had become unwittingly involved in acts of resistance.

The process of ethnography allowed an up-close view of employee resistance and the intended target of their actions. It also allowed the opportunity to develop and differentiate patterns between what activities were occurring, where they were occurring, and what was the motivation for the employee actions. It was recognised that in each of the workplaces, the members of teams reacted in similar ways to the level of control they enjoyed. The most important influence on a team's ability to engage in acts of resistance was their level of off-task time. That is to say, that when the employees had primary tasks driving the majority of their work day, there was limited opportunity to engage in acts of resistance. However, when the employees had work processes that meant primary tasks took a lesser portion of their working day they performed secondary duties throughout this off-task time. The teams with a greater level of off-task time were required to perform with a greater level of discretion over their choice of secondary tasks; they had the freedom to engage in greater levels of resistance and challenges to management.

While it was an unintended finding of this research project, patterns were also noted with regard to the level of cooperative acts of employee interactions. Those employees in teams that had a high level of off-task time also demonstrated a markedly higher freedom to engage between team members to assist with tasks, problem-solve and initiate positive outcomes for the organisation. Ironically, there were many members of the gutter scum that were involved in these teams. Hence, while they had actively colonised an area of discontent where they were free to speak and act in opposition to the expected monoculture, and they were in a team where they had additional freedoms to engage in subtle acts of resistance and misbehaviour within the workplace, they were also engaged in acts of cooperation that went above and beyond the call of duty. These employees were more likely to be engage in what organisational behaviourists refer to as 'organisational citisenship behaviours' (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine and Bacharach, 2000, Organ, 1988). This was an unanticipated finding of this research that is unlikely to have been uncovered through other research methods. Only through the process of ethnography, would such subtleties become obvious. Using Geertz' (1973) words, the researcher was in a position to 'distinguish between a wink and a twitch' to develop out understanding of resistance within work teams.

CONCLUSION

The ethnographic method of data collection is not commonly used in the field of industrial relations, most probably due to the investment of time that is required. However, it is an excellent means of collecting data in the workplace, particularly when the research topic requires a researcher to 'scratch' below the shiny surface of a new workplace. Stated realities may not align with acted realities and the ethnographer is able to get close to the research subjects to uncover any discrepancies. This article has presented the experience of a researcher engaged in ethnographic research to uncover resistance and misbehaviour in a new workplace.

The experiences in this case study organisation has been presented, with a number of conclusions drawn. It has been well established elsewhere that the commitment of time is essential in research projects that employ an ethnographic approach. Indeed, this study confirms that a large amount of patience on the part of the researcher is essential to uncover some of the 'unexpected stories'. This article has explained that within new workplaces, employee resistance still occurs. There may be nothing particularly novel about the acts in which employees engage. However, new workplaces, technological surveillance, peer surveillance and new managerial strategies force employees to find new, safe spaces for their resistance. It was indeed a surprise to discover that the employees with the greatest opportunity to engage in acts of resistance and misbehaviour in the workplace, were also the employees that were more likely to engage in cooperative acts. In this new workplace, it could be said that the worst employees might have even been the best employees.

REFERENCES

Ackroyd, S. and Thompson, P. (1999), *Organisational Misbehaviour,* Sage Publications, London.

Bain, P. and Taylor, P. (2000), 'Entrapped by the Electronic Panopticon?: Worker Resistance in the Call Centre', *New Technology, Work and Employment,* 15: 2-18.

Baird, M. (2000), Unpublished PhD Thesis, Work and Organisation Studies, University of Sydney, Sydney.

Barker, J. (1993), 'Tightening the Iron Cage: Concertive Control in Self-Managing Teams', *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 38: 408-437.

Barnes, A. (2004), 'Diaries, Dunnies and Discipline: Resistance and Accommodation to Monitoring in Call Centres', *Labour and Industry,* 14: 127-137.

Behar, R. (2003), 'Ethnography and the Book that was Lost', *Ethnography,* 4: 15-39.

Benders, J. and Van Hootegem, G. (2000), 'How the Japanese got Teams', in S. Proctor and F. Mueller (eds), *Teamworking,* St Martin's Press, New York, 43-59.

Beynon, H. (1973), *Working for Ford,* Allen Lane and Penguin Education, Wakefield.

Bryman, A. (Ed.) (1988), *Doing Research in Organisations,* Routeledge, London.

Burawoy, M. (1979), *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labour Process under Monopoly Capitalism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Callaghan, G. and Thompson, P. (2001), 'Edwards Revisited: Technical Control and Call Centres', *Open Discussion Papers in Economics,* The Open University.

Cunnison, S. (1966), *Wages and Work Allocation: A Study of Social Relations in a Garment Workshop*, Tavistock Publications, London.

Ditton, J. (1976), 'Perks, Pilferage and the Fiddle: The Historical Structure of Invisible Wages', *Theory and Society*, 4: 39-70.

Edwards, R. (1979), *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century*, Heinemann, London.

Fernie, S. and Metcalf, D. (1998), 'Hanging on the telephone', *CentrePiece,* Centre of Economic Performance, London School of Economics.

Friedmann, A. and McDaniel, D. (1998), 'In the Eye of the Beholder: Ethnography in the Study of Work', in K. Whitfield and G. Strauss (eds), *Researching the World of Work: Strategies and Methods in Studying Industrial Relations,* ILR Press, London, pp. 113-126.

Geertz, C. (1973), *The Interpretation of Cultures,* Basic Books, New York.

Hyman, R. (1975), *Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction*, MacMillan Press, London.

Katz, J. (2002), 'From How to Why? On Luminous Description and Causal Inference in Ethnography (Part 2)', *Ethnography,* 3: 63-90.

Knights, D. and McCabe, D. (2000), ''Ain't Misbehavin'? Opportunities for Resistance under New Forms of 'Quality' Management', *Sociology,* 34: 421-436.

Lankshear, G., Cook, P., Mason, D., Coates, S. and Button, G. (2001), 'Call Centre Employee's Responses to Electronic Monitoring: Some Research Findings', *Work, Employment and Society*, 15: 595-605.

Leopold, J. and Hallier, J. (1997), 'Start up and Ageing in Greenfield Sites: Problems of Sustaining and Adapting Employee Relations Practices over Time', *Human Resource Management Journal,* 7: 72-78.

Lloyd, C. and Newell, H. (2000), 'Selling teams to the salesforce: teamworking in the UK pharmaceutical industry', In *Teamworking* (Eds, Proctor, S. and Mueller, F.) St Martin's Press, New York, pp. 183-202.

Martinez Lucio, M., Jenkins, S. and Noon, M. (2000), 'The Question of Teamworking and Union Identity in the Royal Mail: Beyond Negotiation', in S. Proctor and F. Mueller (eds), *Teamworking,* St Martin's Press, New York: 262-279.

Meredith, J. and Shafer, S. (2002), *Operations Management for MBAs,* John Wiley and Sons, New York.

Neumann, W. (2000), *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Allen and Bacon, Sydney.

Ohno, T. (1988), *Toyota Production System: Beyond Large-Scale Production*, Productivity Press, Cambridge.

Organ, D. (1988), *Organisational Citizenship Behaviour: The Good Soldier Syndrome*, Lexington Books, Lexington.

Parker, M. and Slaughter, J. (1988), *Choosing Sides: Unions and the Team Concept*, South End Press, Boston.

Podsakoff, P., Mackenzie, S., Paine, J. and Bacharach, D. (2000), 'Organisational Citisenship Behaviours: A Critical Review of the Theoretical and Empirical Literature and Suggestions for Future Research', *Journal of Mangement,* 26: 513-563.

Richardson, R., Belt, V. and Marshal, N. (2000), 'Taking Calls to Newcastle: The Regional Implications of the Growth in Call Centres' *Regional Studies,* 43: 357-369.

Rinehart, J., Huxley, C. and Robertson, D. (1997), *Just Another Car Factory? Lean Production and its Discontents,* Cornell University, New York.

Roy, D. (1952), 'Quota Restriction and Goldbricking in a Machine Shop', *The American Journal of Sociology,* 57: 427-442.

Roy, D. (1954), 'Efficiency and 'The Fix': Informal Intergroup Relations in a Piecework Machine Shop', *American Journal of Sociology,* 60: 255-266.

Scott, A. (1994), *Willing Slaves? British Workers Under Human Resource Management*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Sewell, G. (1998), 'The Discipline of Teams: The Control of Team-based Industrial Work through Electronic and Peer Surveillance', *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 43: 397-428.

Sewell, G. and Wilkinson, B. (1992), 'Someone to Watch Over Me: Surveillance, Discipline and the Just-In-Time Labour Process', *Sociology,* 26.

Sharpe, D. (2002), 'Teamworking and Managerial Control within a Japanese Manufacturing Subsidiary in the UK', *Personnel Review*, 31: 267-282.

Smith, V. (1990), *Managing in the Corporate Interest: Control and Resistance in an American Bank*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Spradley, J. (1980), *Participant Observation,* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Sydney.

Taylor, P. and Bain, P. (1999), 'An Assembly Line in the Head: Work and Employee Relations in the Call Centre', *Industrial Relations Journal,* 30: 101-117.

Thompson, P. (2003), 'Fantasy Island: a Labour Process critique of the 'age of surveillance'', *Surveillance and Society,* 1: 138-151.

Thompson, P. and Ackroyd, S. (1995), 'All quiet on the workplace front? A critique of recent trends in British industrial sociology', *Sociology,* 29: 615-632.

Townsend, K. (2003), 'Leisure at Work, Who Can Resist? An Investigation into Workplace Resistance by Leisure Service Employees', *Journal of Industrial Relations,* 45: 442-456.

Townsend, K. (2005), 'Electronic Surveillance and Cohesive Teams: Room for Resistance in an Australian Call Centre?', *New Technology, Work and Employment,* 20: 47-58.

Turnbull, P. (1998), 'The 'Limits to Japanisation: Just in Time, Labour Relations and the UK Automotive Industry', *New Technology, Work and Employment,* 3: 21-29.

van den Broek, D. (2002), 'Monitoring and Surveillance in Call Centres: Some Responses from Australian Workers', *Labour and Industry,* 12: 43-58.

van den Broek, D. (2004), ''We Have the Values': Customers, Control and Corporate Ideology in Call Centre Operations', *New Technology, Work and Employment,* 19: 2-13.

van den Broek, D., Callaghan, G. and Thompson, P. (2002), 'Teams without Teamwork? Explaining the Call Centre Paradox', *6th International Workshop on Teamworking*, Malmo University, Sweden, Obtained from D. van den Broek, University of Sydney.

Whipp, R. (1998), 'Qualitative Methods: Technique or Size', in K. Whitfield and G. Strauss (eds), *Researching the World of Work: Strategies and Methods in Studying Industrial Relations,* Cornell University, New York, 51-63.

Whybrow, A. and Parker, S. (2000), 'Introducing team working. Managing the process of change', in S. Proctor and F. Mueller (eds), *Teamworking,* St Martin's Press, New York, 103-124.

Willmott, H. (1993), 'Strength is Ignorance; Slavery is Freedom: Managing Culture in Modern Organisations', *Journal of Management Studies,* 30: 515-552.

Yin, R. (1994), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Sage, London.