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Revisiting Collectivism:
Unionised Teachers' Response to 'Individualism'

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Abstract

The paper engages with contemporary debates on individualism and collectivism and argues that there is no necessary relationship between individualised management techniques and an individualised orientation to work and refutes a deterministic shift to individualism. It attempts to redress the gap in empirical evidence identified by Madsen (1997) and Towers (1997) by drawing on evidence from a large survey of schoolteachers and a qualitative study of a 'failing' school.

It draws on three main themes, unionisation, appraisal and career development, to show that teachers

a) join and participate in unions for collectivist reasons,

b) that unions are integrally involved in apparently individualised management strategies such as appraisal and

c) that teachers want their union to have a collective role in their career development.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to consider the contemporary debates on individualism and collectivism from an industrial relations perspective. The debates and arguments, although well rehearsed, are rarely backed up with empirical evidence (Madsen 1997; Towers 1997). The importance of the debate is perhaps best encapsulated by the claims that we are seeing the retreat of collectivism (Giddens 1998). This is bolstered by the shift to more individualised management techniques and their perceived association with workers' individualism. This paper aims to address the neglect in the literature identified by Madsen (1997) and Towers (1997) and to provide some empirical evidence to ground the debates more firmly within the field of industrial relations. In particular it focuses on three aspects of the employment relationship relevant to the debate: unionisation, appraisal and career development. The paper provides an important contribution to an underexplored area of the literature on individualism and collectivism by examining 'individualised' substantive areas from a collective perspective and, in doing so, engages with a range of recent work on the debate (see, for example, Smith and Morton 1993; Kessler and Purcell 1995; Valkenburg 1995; Madsen 1997).

The terms 'individualism' and 'collectivism' are rarely defined; rather they are taken for granted terms. The debates tend to shift from societal levels of analysis to workplace levels without an acknowledgement nor a demonstration of the linking mechanisms. The argument posited here is that there is no necessary relationship between the growth of individualised management techniques and individualisation, nor an inevitability of individualism in the context of modern societies and in workers' attitudes. This is explored through a large survey of teachers and a case study of a 'failing' school. The paper initially considers the debates on individualism and collectivism, it then introduces the two studies and their educational context and finally explores the key themes and their implications for the debates.

2.   Individualism and Collectivism in Industrial Relations

The current debate on individualism and collectivism is muddied by conceptual ambiguity. The words are used in different ways to describe different phenomena yet an implied certainty of meaning is assumed. Developments at the level of society and at the workplace have pointed to increasing trends of individualism (Purcell and Ahstrand 1994, Zoll 1995) and writers have argued that there has been a fracturing of collectivism (Bacon and Storey 1996). Of relevance to this project, Madsen identifies three trends of particular importance (Madsen 1997).

'First are changes in the structure of employment due to stagnation or decline in the importance of the primary and secondary sector employment and the 'feminisation' of the labour force. The second set of changes take place in production both inside and outside companies in the direction of the new management models (e.g. human resource management) and new relations between companies (network firms). From an employee perspective, the expected consequences of these trends are new white-collar and service jobs in the public and private sectors, together with rapidly increasing educational requirements in basic education, in-service and advanced training. The third set of changes lies in a shift of identities among wage-earners *from* collectivist value orientations emphasising solidarity and equality *towards* more individualistic value orientations emphasising self-interest and personal development.' (1997 197-8).

Importantly, Madsen points out that the latter tendency toward increased individualisation is often interpreted as evidence that collectively-based organisations, trade unions, etc., are facing major challenges of adaptation and, in a wider sense, that their actual foundations are eroding. However, Madsen goes on to argue that much of the research lacks an empirical base, so that the conclusions are based upon inadequate or speculative grounds (Madsen 1997). This contribution is helpful in that it places the individualism/collectivism debate within wider trends of modernisation, and questions the uni-directional nature of the debate without relevant empirical underpinning. A missing or underplayed aspect of these debates is the role of power in the employment relationship, what Kelly and Waddington call a 'blindness to power' (1995:421). It is this underlying awareness of power relations that conditions the extent to which workers want their unions to join the apparent drift to individualism in the workplace exemplified in the discourse of uncritical human resource management thinking.

This paper argues that trade union individualism and collectivism should be seen as analytically separate from societal trends since unions and their members respond to and act on the effects of structural changes according to their interests (Healy 1999). At the micro level, what becomes interesting is the extent to which workers are looking for an individual or collective response from their trade union on apparently individualistic issues. Studies show how highly individualistic human resource management approaches, e.g. appraisal (Healy 1997),

performance related pay (Kessler and Purcell 1995) and career development (Healy 1999), were collectivised by trade union involvement, and these insights are developed in this paper. This provides some challenge to the Hirsch and Roth thesis (cited in Madsen 1997:199) that the tendency toward increased individualisation is deterministically derived from the changes in the conditions of production. Madsen compares this with a broader 'modernity-oriented' approach to individualisation and working life by drawing on the work of Valkenburg (1995) and Zoll (1995), who use Giddens' (1990) analysis of modernisation as a means to understand individualisation as an expression of underlying, fundamental changes in the processes by which individual identity is formed (Madsen 1997:199). This leads to the view that the collective foundations for traditional working class culture find more individual expression and that the 'stable pattern disintegrates in favour of an apparent 'pluralism', in which the individual to a greater extent 'chooses' or is 'drawn' towards a particular 'lifestyle' or individual identity' (Madsen 1997:198).

Fox (1985:192) described the pure and extreme form of individualism as the form under which individuals not only pursue their own enlightened self-interest, which they define for themselves, but do so with no concerted action between them, each acting as an atomistic, independent and self-responsible unit and being treated as such. Fox (1985: 192) terms this as 'atomistic' individualism, which he distinguishes from 'instrumental' collectivism, in which individuals, while still using perceived self-interest as their criterion of judgement and action, find it expedient to concert with others on those issues where collective action yields better results. Thus, trade union individualism is used in this paper to refer to those aspects of trade union activity that focus on the provision of services that are not reliant on union power, only on the union survival as an organisation. These are services that might also be offered by a commercial or charitable organisation; this is the consumerist model advocated by the Trade Union Congress in 1989 (TUC 1989) and Bassett and Cave (1993). Those operating within an individualistic paradigm may either see the trade union as having no role in, for example, appraisal or their own career development or see its role as confined to service provision such as financial benefits. In this sense, workers would be acting as atomistic individuals. Although Williams, drawing on Fox (1985) and Hyman (1992), asserts that a wholly individualistic strategy would be misplaced, as instrumental and solidaristic concerns combine and interact in the functioning of anything that is recognisably a trade union (Williams 1997:508).
Lest the pull of the dichotomous thinking in the debate skews thinking, it is important to remember that individualism has historically been part of trade unionism and became of

particular importance with the inception of new model trade unionism in the mid nineteenth century in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, despite its historical significance to trade unions, the promotion of the extension of the individual relationship between union and member has been criticised both philosophically and empirically. For example, Bassett and Cave's (1993) recommendations that individual services form the basis of union organisation are criticised for the failure to address the reassertion of employer power in the pursuit of profitability and the control of the labour force (Kelly and Waddington 1995:423). Challenging employer power is not part of recent trade union initiatives, such as the Cranfield Study, which seems to deny the value of local activists and ignores the need for unions to recruit more women, both of which approaches, writers have argued may lead to union renewal (Fosh and Heery 1990; Fairbrother 1996; Kirton and Healy 1999).

Klandermans (1985) identified three collective approaches to trade union participation: frustration-aggression theory, rational choice theory and interactionist theory, which have similarities to the three categories of motives for union joining of Van de Vall (1963)[i]. Common to both Klandermans and Van de Vall`s work is the emphasis on both instrumental and solidaristic approaches. The complexity of collective motives for union participation is evident from the above studies. 'Collectivism' in the field of employment relates to the existence of independent, or quasi-independent organisations founded to represent and articulate the interests of groups of employees within the employment unit, the firm, the industry, sector, country or community (Kessler and Purcell 1995: 345). Throughout this paper, there is a mindfulness of Kelly and Waddington's view that trade union collectivism is 'a root principle, because only through collective organisation and action can unions challenge employer power, and it is only through the deployment of material and ideological power resources that unions obtain individual and collective results for their members' (1995:114)[ii]. This meaning of collectivism further encourages a distinction between two forms of collectivism, instrumentalism and solidarism, in order to show how 'individual and collective results' fit clearly within a collective paradigm.

Instrumental collective motives reflect the belief that individuals on their own cannot protect and improve their conditions of work and need the strength of a collectivity. Instrumental collectivism is often confused with 'individualism' because individuals are concerned to protect their own job interests. The key point of difference is that individuals recognise their own weakness in power in relation to their employer and look to the union to redress this imbalance. This category reflects the insights from Vall de Vall (1963) and from Klandermans

frustration/aggression approach (1985). Although unions have always attracted those with a calculative orientation (Fox 1985, Williams 1997), as Madsen has shown, an extension of individualist value orientations 'does not immediately lead to a disengagement in relation to being collectively organised in a trade union' (1997:213).

A solidaristic collectivist union member has a belief in trade unionism beyond the personal benefit it ascribes to the members themselves reflecting Van de Vall's ideal collective motives. Van de Vall describes such motives as 'sociocentric' because the interests involved are shared with others, and partly because they are founded on moral duty or ethical values (1970:148). A focus on the solidaristic collectivist aspects of career in a highly unionised professional occupational group may also concretise Valkenburg's concern that the discourse on solidarity degenerates into a meaningless abstraction (Valkenburg 1995:131). A trade union member with a solidaristic collectivist approach will look to the union to prioritise union organisation issues and, in the public sector in particular, may see their career and service provision, in relation to say health, education, housing, as being inextricably linked.

Trade union members' perception of the union's role in individualised issues may hold both individualist and collectivist approaches and their priorities may alter over space and time (Healy 1999). Thus, for Valkenburg individualisation must be understood in a relative sense, as the vast majority of even individualistically oriented members consider union membership necessary for ensuring their interest representation (Valkenburg 1995). For this paper, the centrality of power to collectivism is its central distinguishing feature from individualism.

3.   Research approach

The paper draws on two empirical studies; firstly, a survey of teachers' career development[iii] and secondly, an in-depth qualitative case study of a 'failing school'. Three aspects of each of these studies will be explored: unionisation, appraisal and career development. The benefit of the approach is that it enables a more comprehensive analysis by drawing on both the survey method and qualitative insights from the case study.

The Survey
The survey was a postal questionnaire study of 3,600 National Union of Teachers (NUT) members undertaken in 1994. The sample was structured to get a representative response from primary women and men teachers and secondary women and men teachers in line with DfEE

data[iv]. 1,855 questionnaires were returned (52 per cent response rate). The study has also drawn extensively on documentary sources and interviews with key union actors and teachers to inform. The study was broad based and its findings are found in a number of papers including: (Healy, 1999a; Healy, 1999; Healy, 1997a; Healy, 1997b; Healy and Kraithman, 1996; Healy and Kraithman, 1994a) and this paper draws on three of these papers in particular[v] (Healy, 1997a; Healy, 1997b; Healy, 1999).

The Case Study

The qualitative research is an in-depth case study carried out in an inner-city secondary school, 'Parkville'[vi], in 1998-9, which was firstly 'failed' by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), closed eighteen months later and then re-opened under the Government's 'Fresh Start' scheme[vii]. The research was undertaken during the 'closing' phase of the school. Parkville had around 450 pupils aged 11-16 years, with a high rate of pupil turnover and a majority of students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds[viii]. At the time of the closure announcement, the management and staff were advised that they would not be guaranteed jobs in the new school and would individually be offered severance terms. The headteacher resigned at the end of the 1998 Summer term and a deputy headteacher was appointed as acting head for the final academic year. A new 'principal', a so-called 'Superhead', was appointed for the Fresh Start school.

A plurality of research methods was used. Data was gathered by semi-structured interviews with management; staff; governors; the Local Education Authority (LEA); the main trade union (NUT) representatives[ix] and direct and participant observation in the school.

Educational Context

The context of education shapes the structures of collectivism and individualism in schools and the orientations of teachers. Teachers have experienced major changes in their conditions of employment, particularly since the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) and the subsequent election of New Labour who came into power with the mantra of 'Education, education, education'. The effects on teachers' employment of education reform, following the ERA 1988, led to firstly, a centralisation and bureaucratisation of the teaching process via the introduction of the National Curriculum and secondly, the decentralisation and devolvement of management through enhanced accountability via inspection, compulsory appraisal and testing and Local Management of Schools (LMS). LMS gave schools more direct authority over budgets and staff.

The simultaneous centralisation of the curriculum and the decentralisation of financial management changed teachers' employment conditions leading to greater work intensification, reduction in autonomy, more stress, increased class sizes and greater insecurity (STRB 1994; Healy and Kraithman 1994a; Sinclair, Ironside et al. 1996; Travers and Cooper 1996). At the same time, teachers' union density remained high (Beatson and Butcher 1993) reflecting a long tradition of unionisation. The intensification of work has not lessened under New Labour, although this Government has adopted a more ambivalent approach to teachers.

Of particular relevance to Parkville, the New Labour government has continued the publication of school league tables with 'good' schools situated at the top and 'poor', 'failing', schools at the bottom. The latter, particularly under the 'Naming and Shaming' policy, face closure if they fail to improve in line with centralised, government determined standards, as was the case with Parkville.

The paper now turns to the key themes.

4.   The Findings

Unionisation

Drawing on Healy (1997a), the survey data demonstrate little support for individualistic reasons for union joining; they demonstrate strong support for instrumental collectivist reasons. This is in line with other studies which show that people join unions to protect them if they have a problem at work (Kerr 1992; Waddington and Whitston 1997). The survey also identified solidaristic collectivism as important to this group of teachers, with nearly half the respondents having joined the NUT because they had a belief in trade unions (Healy, 1997a: 151). Whilst solidaristic collectivism is often low in the priorities for union joining (Waddington and Whitston 1997), it tends to be higher for white-collar workers (Waddington and Whitson, 1996). The survey respondents demonstrated a much higher collectivist orientation than was the case for white collar workers generally, which would appear contrary to the relationship between differentiation and white-collar work posited by Zoll (1995). It also provided an optimistic account of young workers and young women workers in particular – young women teachers had more solidaristic orientations towards union joining than young men and than their older colleagues (Healy 1997a:155). These findings differ from Waddington and Whitston's study (1997) and point to the importance of context in understanding patterns of unionisation.

Predictably, instrumental collectivist reasons for union joining also emerged from the qualitative research undertaken at Parkville. As with most schools, Parkville was highly unionised and the local representative explains why:

> '… the reason over the years is that the union has actively recruited people who weren't union members into the NUT just to make sure that everyone who is teaching staff is, by and large, unionised and it has a presence, because it's in their interest' (local union representative)

Reflecting this appeal to an instrumental collectivist orientation to union joining, the following teacher demonstrated an atomistic orientation in her concern for individual issues:

> 'I *don't like* being a member of the NUT, the only reason I'm a member of the NUT is for *insurance purposes* if something goes wrong in a science lesson or on a school trip or if I lose my camera' (teacher)[x]

However, the instrumental collectivism may be behind the choice of the NUT in this case, rather than any insurance body, thus echoing Williams' (1997) views on the difficulty of seeing trade unions in a purely individualistic way.

The belief in trade unionism was particularly strong among trade union representatives in the survey (Healy 1997:151). At Parkville, the union representative explains what this solidaristic orientation (and its encompassing of instrumentalism) means in practice:

> 'lots of things that the union has been involved in … whether it's arguing for the right for progressive policies in education, mixed ability teaching, or … policies to do with equal opportunities, all that stuff – I think the union's played a big part, the union's members individually … and then industrial action, whenever the national union has called on us to take industrial action we've always been willing to do it - over whatever issue, and one or two others as well, (laughs) as you may have gathered, you know, like ambulance workers and that' (local union representative)

The teachers at Parkville felt strongly about the educational issues surrounding their 'failing' school and were prepared to collectively voice their concerns about the school and the wellbeing of the (already disadvantaged) pupils. Solidarism was evident when, for example, they organised a demonstration outside the local Town Hall against the closure of the school. However, their willingness to act collectively in order to protect their school and their

profession (and for other state workers, as identified above) earned them a reputation for being 'militant', a suggestion refuted by this teacher:

> '… there's been a number of individuals who have attempted to defend state education and certain attacks on state education whether that's the … compulsory redundancies, the removal of teachers, increases in class sizes, such things like that, worsening of working conditions – which I believe undermines the ability to actually perform … at quality levels, or whatever. I've seen people defending that, that's what I've seen' (teacher).

This demonstrates how solidaristic collectivism and instrumental collectivism are not mutually exclusive, particularly for professional workers such as teachers where the ability to perform their jobs in a professional way is inextricably linked with a need to maintain or improve working conditions and standards. However, such solidarism was perceived negatively and resulted in negative labelling.

The militant 'labelling' was part of the discourse once Parkville was identified as 'failing'. The LEA and HMI constantly monitored the teachers; they were under attack from the local and national press who attributed blame to the teachers for the school's closure. More significantly, attribution of blame was put directly on the 'militant' nature of the teachers[xi]. In many ways, this perpetuated collectivism as a form of protection, as the acting head commented:

> '… I don't think there's a *militant tendency* in the school, I think there's a *defensiveness* about the school, a sort of *collective* defensiveness … we're under attack all the time and we've got to stick together and the attack has been coming from the outside. But also from senior management as a thing in the past, and from the authority and from Ofsted and from everybody else and I think that's made people … possibly *resist* certain things which they might not have done before' (acting head)

The situation surrounding Parkville meant that for different reasons the teachers demonstrated both instrumental and solidaristic collectivism simultaneously. The belief and experience of collectivism in this school was not determined by the age or sex of the teachers, rather it was shaped (although not determined) by employer action at both the levels of the state and the school. This theme is now developed with regard to appraisal.

Appraisal

Appraisal is seen as central to HRM (human resource management) and is one of the factors that characterise an HRM approach to management (Millward, Stevens et al. 1992). The increasing use of HRM approaches (including appraisal) is part of the 'evidence' that the employment relationship is becoming more individualised. Indeed even writers critical of the dichotomous approach to individualism and collectivism describe appraisal as 'clearly individualistic' (Kessler and Purcell 1995:344). Thus the relationship between trade unions and appraisal schemes tends to be unacknowledged in the mainstream literature and it is only in the critical accounts of appraisal that the trade union role is brought into the analysis (e.g., Townley 1990, Walsh, 1987; Austrin 1994; Collinson 1994; Sinclair, Seifert et al. 1995; Healy 1997b).

The appraisal part of the survey utilised traditional industrial relations approaches to research by using documentary evidence as well as survey data. Whilst a number of themes emerged from this analysis[xii], of relevance to this paper is that the union influence was direct and traditional. Unions advised their members of their rights on appraisal and they warned of the self-appraisal process. The National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) memorably reminded their members that 'anything you say may be used in evidence against you' (1992). It was also of note that 320 teachers in the survey stated that their schools did not comply with what were and are statutory requirements (i.e. 17 per cent) following its introduction under the Education (School Teacher Appraisal) Regulations 1991.

Parkville was an example of a school where there was collective resistance by the teachers to the introduction of appraisal; the deputy head commented:

> 'there was resistance, union resistance and staff resistance … because they saw it
> linked to pay scales … but because of the resistance we couldn't take it up …… and
> it just never happened' (deputy head 1)

Thus, both the survey and the case study school demonstrate how an individualised concept is collectivised by union involvement (Healy 1997b:206) and that collectivism operates at different levels in the system. Both studies demonstrate that teachers were not against appraisal *per se*, and in fact some would have welcomed it, as the following quotations from Parkville demonstrate:

> 'I think it's important to appraise teachers' work if it's done in a supportive way, yes,
> yes, I'm not opposed to it in principle' (teacher)

'I'd welcome it because I've only been looked at once … no feed back and so you're isolated more … people don't tell you how you're doing … I've had to ask how I'm doing…' (teacher).

In line with the discourse surrounding the use of appraisal as a control mechanism (see Walsh 1987; Ironside and Seifert 1995; Healy 1997b), Parkville teachers were also concerned with its usage:

'but of course there's the knock on affect that it's a marking process, it's flagging up those weak teachers, it's written down. What happens to those records is very important' (teacher)

The resistance to the introduction of appraisal at Parkville must be situated in the wider context of the profound changes taking place within the educational sector and teachers' employment. Parkville's teachers were not alone in opposing its introduction, teacher unions were 'arguing strongly against the use of appraisal for any purpose other than professional development' (Ironside and Seifert 1995:194). Indeed appraisal was a uniting force in that the promotion of development driven appraisal rather than a control model was a joint union response (*NASUWT* undated.). In line with this, the exploration of appraisal in the two studies shows how unions were integrally involved in the appraisal process and resistance to aspects of it.

What is not always acknowledged is that resistance may carry its own price. The consequences of appraisal resistance at Parkville were grave. Possibly, had the teachers co-operated with the appraisal process, then issues subsequently raised by Ofsted and HMI might have emerged and been tackled. A school governor attributed lack of appraisal to what became a more austere form of performance monitoring with the emphasis firmly on control. As a result of the Ofsted and HMI reports, the teachers were more closely scrutinised, as this deputy head explains:

'one of the things we've done as senior management over the last couple of years is more monitoring of lessons … we thought people were doing what we thought they were doing and HMI found differently … and so we thought "well, we need to get in and see" - people felt threatened by it, you know, monitoring every lesson' (deputy head 1)

Such monitoring resulted in some teachers being put into competency procedures[xiii].

The teachers again acted collectively, this time in support of their colleagues in a belief that the competency procedures were both unfair and unjust:

'… there's one or two teachers who have been picked out for competency procedures … and again, that did not help the relationship between staff and the senior management because in our view the competency procedures were unfair, you know? We would have opposed them, whether they were fair or not, but they were unfair and you know, these were good teachers, these people were not bad teachers and so it was very unfair' (teacher)

This quotation highlights both the instrumental collectivism of supporting colleagues with problems in the workplace and the solidaristic collectivism of supporting trade unionism in itself. Parkville teachers took a collective stand against the individualistic issue of competency procedures, and this heightened industrial relations tensions within the school. Whilst the attribution of the lack of appraisal for the introduction of competency procedures might seem an attractive explanation, however, the evidence suggests otherwise. The survey data showed that only 11 per cent of teachers and 14 per cent of heads reported that appraisal had led to better classroom teaching. At Parkville, the resistance was collectivist, but there was collusion by management and what Healy (1997b) has characterised as 'appraisal disdain'. A critical aspect of the appraisal process is career development and it is to this that the paper now turns.

Career Development
The exploration of career development in Healy (1999) reiterated the traditional union role in protecting and advancing members' interests through the use of grievance and disciplinary procedures. Despite this, in the literature on career development, 'career' tends to be treated as a purely individualistic process. Yet career is about vertical and horizontal development and continuity and curtailment. The question asked of the NUT respondents was 'what should your union do to enhance your career development?'. Despite an apparently individualistically oriented question, the analysis showed that few saw the union as having a purely individualistic role, instead they wanted the union to adopt a breadth of approach that encompassed instrumental and solidaristic reasons. Unsurprisingly, women put greater emphasis on equality development issues than did men. Controlling for the equality differences, women and men wanted an instrumental approach from their union and a solidaristic approach in the same proportions (Healy, 1999). The solidaristic approach was characterised by wanting the union to have political influence in the education and employment structures that shaped their careers and, importantly, children's education. The history of the NUT has traditionally been associated with the desire to improve the education of working class children and work to ensure that their opportunities are the same as those children from more privileged backgrounds

(Thompson 1927). Teachers today reflect these principles when in relation to a question on their career development where an individualistic response might be considered probable, the link with state education was made. Teachers from the survey provide good examples, as exemplified in the following quotation:

> 'Fight for funds for State education. Before anything else can enhance my career development I need to be able to do the job to the best of my ability – which means having the resources necessary' (cited in Healy, 1999:223).

At Parkville, career development during the time of the research has only exceptionally followed a hierarchical form, more usually, when it took the form of career curtailment and it is the collectivism of this aspect that the paper now explores. The formula on the allocation of funds via LMS to schools favours the oversubscribed schools and disadvantages those schools with falling rolls; this affects both the education of children and the employment structures faced by their teachers. As teacher salaries form a major part of a school's budget, the employment and progression or, indeed, re-deployment and redundancy of teachers has increased in significance; the career progression of many teachers is shaped by the school's ability to meet salary costs. In some schools this has resulted in teachers opting for early retirement or for voluntary or compulsory redundancy (Ironside and Seifert 1995; Sinclair, Seifert et al. 1995; Calveley and Healy 1999; Calveley and Healy 2000). Such actions clearly affect the career progression of teachers but also the education of children as teachers are often not replaced and therefore class sizes increase. Parkville demonstrates how these structural constraints impact on teachers' careers and the union response.

On appointment, Parkville's headteacher inherited a massive budget deficit and as a deputy head explained:

> 'if we spend money on teachers … there's no money for anything else … because you know, one teacher with on-costs is worth minimum some thirty thousand quid! So get rid of one teacher and release thirty thousand quid and you can do an awful lot with that!' (deputy head 1)

Consequently, the headteacher turned to staffing issues to reduce the school's budget overspend:

> 'it was quite clear that by conventional standards this school was quite heavily overstaffed on the teaching side … so we went through a programme of voluntary redundancies, not without coercion of course, people had to be persuaded to take voluntary redundancy, and we reduced the staff count by nearly four' (headteacher)

A result of the (in)voluntary redundancies was staff resistance and a display of solidarity, culminating in a breakdown in management-staff relations. Whilst recognising the problems of LMS, this deputy head explains how the headteacher's actions motivated the union members:

> 'one member of staff who eventually went on voluntary redundancy didn't really want to go. Was sort of pushed into it, I think … I suppose there was bad feeling there … obviously from the union's point of view, you don't cut staff's jobs. But the way things are with LMS, you know, schools are being forced to reduce their staff budget. So that was the start of it, really, I think' (deputy head 2)

Johnson (1999) suggests that 'the fear of redundancy has now entered the collective consciousness of teachers' (1999:84). At Parkville, such 'fear' clearly would have been in the minds of the teachers; however, it was not for purely instrumental reasons that they acted collectively. In support of their colleagues, the teachers withdrew their 'goodwill', i.e. their willingness to take extra-curricular activities, such as after-school clubs and lunchtime duties. The following teacher saw such solidaristic collectivism in support of colleagues as being the normal course of events for union members:

> '… then issuing the compulsory redundancy notices and then getting a union reaction - of course you'll get a reaction! … you're in the union, you're bound to take - we only withdrew goodwill, we didn't take strike action, we only withdrew goodwill' (teacher)

Ironside and Seifert suggest, 'there is great potential for disruption within the school if teachers perceive management action to be unjustly harsh or unreasonable or simply muddled' (Ironside and Seifert 1995:206).

The closing of Parkville, and the corresponding threat of redundancy gave the notion of 'career' a significant connotation. For some, the closure of the school would result in a complete change in career direction by the curtailment of their teaching career; for others it represented a horizontal or vertical (both upwards and downwards) career move. This time the collectivity of the teachers failed as the national union was unable to prevent the implementation of the redundancy programme, although they were involved in negotiating enhanced redundancy terms

for the teachers. For Parkville teachers, who fought firstly against the principle of redundancy and for the jobs of their colleagues, and secondly for their own jobs, 'career' was an issue of both solidaristic and instrumental importance. Indeed, they characterised their resistance in a very solidaristic way:

> 'we've all been driven together in defence. … (management action) did help
>
> to create a much stronger union' (teacher)

Thus demonstrating that trade union participation and involvement continued despite the increasingly weak employment position of the teachers.

5.   Conclusions

The paper has shown that there is no necessary relationship between individualised management techniques and an individualised orientation to work nor that there is a deterministic shift to individualism. Importantly the danger of conflating a managerial stance posited on enhancing the relationship with the individual and aiming to 'decollectivise' the employment relationship (see Williams 1997) with the attitudes of union members is exposed. The evidence presented in this paper concurs with the conclusions of Kessler and Purcell (1995) who argue that it is a false dichotomy to separate individualism from collectivism and that to do so is damaging to the study of industrial relations. It is of course important to make an analytical separation but to acknowledge the dynamic interrelationship between individualism and collectivism.

Union joining and participation in teaching remain strong in periods of membership decline and in the face of major educational and employment changes. This is despite (or because of) the introduction of greater individualised management approaches by enhancing accountability through for example, appraisal and examination league tables. The debates on collectivism have tended to omit the critical role of power; exceptions include Kelly and Waddington (1995); and Kelly (1998). The importance of power, or lack of it, emerged in the analysis of Parkville as the teachers resisted the introduction of appraisal, competency procedures and compulsory redundancies. As is often the case, however, ultimately the balance of power lay with management, in this case, the Government, as the school closed and the staff was made redundant.

Earlier work has shown how unions are actively involved in influencing appraisal documentation and its interpretation to union members (Healy 1997b). The extent of non-compliance emerged from the survey and the effect of non-compliance was sharply illustrated in the context of

Parkville, findings not unrelated to the current debates on appraisal and performance related pay in schools over recent years. These works illustrate how the introduction of appraisal by statute does not necessarily lead to its implementation. The lessons of this experience may repeat themselves with the introduction of performance related pay under New Labour.

The survey showed the importance that union members gave to union involvement in their career development, yet this is neglected in the literature on careers (Healy, 1999). The breadth of career development, as influenced by structural constraints is brought out in the case of Parkville. The influence of the union in the critical phase of this school's closing demonstrates the way that career development is both contested and collectivised. The neglect of a collectivist perspective on careers provides only partial understanding of teachers' and other unionised workers careers.

The size and scope of the survey provides an insight into the views of teachers in schools, although it is acknowledged that the teachers surveyed were all members of the NUT, a teacher union perceived to be more militant and less passive to government imposed educational changes. This raises the question as to the extent to which the results can be said to represent the views of the teaching profession as a whole. The complex multi-union situation in teaching suggests that some union members may adopt a more individualistic or predominantly instrumental approach e.g. the Professional Association of Teachers (now declining in numbers), but that others are still firmly collectivist in their responses, e.g. the NASUWT. The case study gives 'voice' to the feelings and views of teachers of a school situated at the 'bottom' of the school league tables (who face both similar and different problems associated with LMS and other government imposed policies to those schools at the 'top'). However, in many ways Parkville teachers are experiencing the extreme effects of government reforms that to a greater or lesser degree are also being faced by teachers across the sector. What is clear from both studies, however, is how instrumental and solidaristic collectivism are inextricably linked to structural constraints as teachers fight to maintain their employment situation and their ability to act professionally. These insights suggest that paper is more widely relevant, in particular for other public sector professional workers.

This paper brings into question the 'retreat of collectivism' (Giddens 1998) in employment, and situates it in the context of management change (at different levels) and worker resistance. In a public sector service, such as education, worker interests will always be particularly complex

because of the interplay between multiple stakeholders, including, in this case, the children and their education. The studies show how structural constraints emerge at different levels of management and how the response of the union and teachers is perceived both from an instrumental orientation in relation to teachers' careers, but also from a solidaristic orientation which encompasses trade union and professional values.

Notes

[i] a   instrumental motives - people participate because they think they stand to gain by protection against the arbitrariness of employers (similar to rational choice theory);

  b   ideal- collective motives - people participate because of the general societal functions of the union movement as a movement of change;

  c   social pressures - people participate because of social pressure from colleagues, family members, etc., (similar to the interactionist approach but can reflect both instrumental and ideal-collective motives).

[ii] Power is central to some writers' preference for the terms 'decollectivisation' (Smith and Morton 1993, Williams 1997); Williams asserts that the concept of decollectivisation ascribes the current weaknesses of organised labour to the concrete actions undertaken by employers and the state to weaken the collective social power of the unions within society (1997:499).

[iii] Undertaken with David Kraithman, Business School, University of Hertfordshire.

[iv] DES (1991) data showed that the breakdown by sex in teaching was 36 per men and 64 per women; this was closely reflected in the breakdown of survey respondents (34 per cent men and 66 per cent women).

[v] Statistical data are found in the cited papers.

[vi] Parkville is a pseudonym. The research was carried out by Moira Calveley as part of the fieldwork of a study on 'Workplace Industrial Relations in a 'Failing School'

[vii] Schools under this programme may either be taken over by another 'successful' school in the area or be closed and re-opened with a new name and usually a new head teacher. Change has to be 'more than superficial' in order for the school to improve.

[viii] Approximately 73% are eligible for free school meals – the national average is around 14% (Ofsted press release 10/11/97).

[ix] The majority of teachers belonged to the NUT; the headteacher and deputy headteachers belonged to the Secondary Heads Association (SHA).

[x] Emphasis added in interview quotes, through the use of italics, is the interviewee's own emphasis.

[xi] See Calveley, M. and G. Healy (2000). *The Politics of Workplace Relations: Collectivism in 'Failing School'.* The Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand (AIRAANZ) 14th Annual Conference, Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, University of Newcastle. for a more detailed analysis of this topic.

[xii] There was a tension between the development and control aspects of appraisal, the experience had brought little benefit to most teachers, although heads and deputies reported greater benefits than did class teachers (Healy G, 1997b).

[xiii] These are formal procedures introduced by the head teacher to monitor the performance of teachers who are considered to be 'unable to meet the requirements of the post' Ironside, M. and R. Seifert (1995). *Industrial Relations in Schools.* London: Routledge.; failure to reach the desired standards may ultimately lead to dismissal.