



7th CMS Conference, Naples 2011, Italy

THE DYNAMICS AND CHALLENGES OF IDEOLOGICAL CONTROL: EXPLORING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN IDENTITY REGULATION, DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AND INDIVIDUALS' SUBJECTIVITIES

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 30th November 2010

STREAM CONVENORS:

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Much of the critical research of the last two decades has focused on ideological modes of managerial control of employees. It has been argued that due to the complex, knowledge-intensive and instable nature of post-Fordist organizing, management relies today on modes of control that do not merely enforce workers' respect of given rules but rather secure their discretionary commitment to the organization (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). This commitment is most effectively achieved through managerial discourses and material practices that regulate employees' identity, stimulating them to develop a sense of the self – subjectivities and identities – in line with managerial objectives (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994). Grey (1994), for instance, investigated how career structures can serve to structure and constrain how people define their selves along predictable and adaptable trajectories (see also Alvesson, 2010). Contemporary control is therefore seen as primarily operating through employees' own identity work, and specifically, their self-positioning within managerially inspired discourses about work and organization with which they become more or less identified and committed. In this perspective, discourse of management can be understood as a generalized 'technology of control', a 'hegemonic model of organization' (Spicer and Böhm, 2007).

Drawing on post-structuralist theory and the work of Foucault on power/knowledge in particular (cf. Knights and Willmott, 1989), the writings on ideological control have examined how organizational ideologies shape individuals' subjectivities and identities as workers, employees and professionals (Casey, 1995; Svenningsson and Alvesson, 2003). While most empirical studies have highlighted the control dimension of ideology, some authors have shown that subjects are not passive receptacles of ideology but rather agents

reflecting and acting upon it. Even more, their actions might be key to both challenging and reproducing ideological control (Fleming and Spicer, 2003). Examining such reflection and action allows seeing not only individuals' compliance but also, possibly, expressions of micro-emancipation (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Zanoni and Janssens, 2007).

Despite the considerable body of knowledge on the dynamics of identity regulation and resistance, little research has investigated how these dynamics play out on a socio-demographically heterogeneous workforce characteristic of contemporary organizations (for exceptions, see Siebers, 2009; Zanoni and Janssens, 2007). This is surprising considering that one particularly powerful way to regulate employees' identity is to provide them with social categories dividing up the social world into "us" and "them" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), yet one's positioning in relation to and comparison with others within an organization does not occur in a social vacuum (Siebers, 2004). Organizational discursive and material practices are embedded in broader cultural systems with own values, language, symbols and rules for ascribing individuals within social categories and modalities of interaction between individuals belonging to the same or different social categories. Identity regulation practices at the organizational level necessarily relate to identity regulation practices at broader societal and international levels.

The main goal of this stream is to explore how managerial ideological control is exerted on minority individuals and how they, in turn, engage with such control in their identity work. In this stream, we welcome both empirical and theoretical papers that contribute to expanding critical research on organizational identity/diversity, including papers that:

- analyze identity regulatory discourses at the (inter-)organizational level and their relation with broader identity regulatory discourses. For instance: Through what kinds of organizational discourses does the company attempt to regulate employees' identities (i.e. HRM, diversity management, organizational culture, etc.)? How do specific socio-demographic groups of employees engage with the organisation's identity regulatory discourses? How do gender/religious/ethnic/linguistic/sexual identities and professional identities relate in individuals' identity work? How do identity regulatory discourses at the organizational and (multi)national level intersect?
- relate identity regulation to a variety of (sub-)organizational (discursive) practices and structures such as work processes, organizational culture, customer relations, business ethics, empowerment policies, etc. to gain a better understanding of the multiple ways heterogeneous workforces are controlled in contemporary organizations. For instance: In what ways do such organizational practices influence how individuals make sense of themselves, their work and their relationships at work? How do these organisational practices impact on specific socio-demographic groups? How do they influence their identity work?

- explore the reciprocal interdependence between managerial identity/diversity regulation and employee resistance, including the possibility of forms of micro-emancipation. For instance: How and in what specific ways do specific minorities resist managerial control? In what ways is identity regulation resisted by different groups in organizations and with what effects? What is the relationship between identity adjustment, diversity management policies and the identity of different organisational minorities? How does minority individuals' own identity work affect their professional careers? Under what conditions do minority employees achieve forms of micro-emancipation in work settings or do they have to face exclusion from vital resources fueled by ideological control?

KEY WORDS:

Ideological Control, Identity/Diversity, Managerial Regulation, Subjectivity, Heterogeneous Workforces

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SUBMISSIONS

We invite **abstracts** of maximum **1000 words**, on A4 paper format, single spaced, 12 point font. They should be submitted to Patrizia Zanoni - Patrizia.Zanoni@econ.kuleuven.be; Hans Siebers - h.g.siebers@uvt.nl; Vincenza Esposito - vincespo@unisannio.it and Mario Pezzillo Iacono - mapezzil@unina.it, by **30th November 2010**