

Original citation:

Dundon, Tony, Cullinane, Niall, Donaghey, Jimmy, Dobbins, Tony, Wilkinson, Adrian and Hickland, Eugene. (2014) Double-breasting employee voice : an assessment of motives, arrangements and durability. Human Relations . ISSN 0018-7267

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Publisher's statement:

Published version: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0018726714531997>

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Double-breasting employee voice: an assessment of motives, arrangements and durability

Tony Dundon, Niall; Cullinane, Jimmy Donaghey, Tony Dobbins, Adrian Wilkinson and Eugene Hickland

Abstract

This article explores employee voice within the specific institutional arrangement of double-breasting. Double-breasting is when multi-plant organisations recognise trade unions in some company sites, with non-union arrangements at other company plants, or where a unionised firm acquires a new site that it then operates on a non-union basis. We examine three research questions in four separate case study organisations that operate employee voice double-breasting arrangements across 16 workplace locations on the island of Ireland. These questions consider employer motives for double-breasting, the practices that characterise double-breasting employee voice, and the micro-political implications of double-breasting. The article contributes to knowledge on the emergence and impact of double-breasting and employee voice systems. We subsequently advance two theoretical propositions: the first theorising employer motives for double-breasting, and the second explaining the extent to which the practice of double-breasting is durable over time.

Keywords

employee voice, double-breasting, employee representation, union avoidance

Introduction

Employer motives for employee voice systems are of growing importance to academics, practitioners and policy advisors (Wilkinson et al., 2010). Employee voice systems are typically regarded as incorporating a variety of workplace structures and processes which enable, and at times empower, employees directly and indirectly to contribute to decision-making in the firm (Boxall and Purcell, 2003: 162). As union membership has declined across most industrialised economies, a multiform system of voice has emerged to replace or sit alongside traditional trade union channels (Marchington et al., 1993, 2001; Wilkinson et al., 2004). In recent years, employer strategies for employee voice have been studied in the context of examining multiple channels (or ‘bundles’) of practices, either within a single enterprise or set of firms, or extrapolating inference from large data sets (Kersley et al., 2006; Bryson et al., 2013; van Wanrooy et al., 2013). Evidence points to significant patterns in ‘hybrid’ voice regimes, where non-union channels co-exist with union forms of representation, or situations in which firms operate non-union systems as a ‘substitute’ for union voice (Willman et al., 2006; Dundon and Gollan, 2007; Campolieti et al., 2013). A related emerging phenomenon is the parallel use of union *and* non-union mechanisms known as ‘double-breasting’: that is the situation when a multi-plant organisation recognises trade unions in some of its company locations, while also implementing non-union arrangements at other company plants, or where a unionised firm acquires a new site that it consciously operates on a non-union basis (Gunnigle et al., 2005:250). Crucially, it is distinct from hybrid or dual union and non-union regimes in that the focus is not on comparative practices within sites, but rather union status across individual sites within the same company.

A series of recent studies indicate an increasing propensity amongst multinational companies (MNCs) in particular to adopt double-breasting arrangements (Gunnigle et al., 2009; Marginson et al., 2010; Lamare et al., 2013). In a comparative sample of 405 unionised

MNCs operating across Canada, Ireland and the UK, Lamare et al., (2013) found that 84 percent of firms in Canada, 70 percent in Britain and 50 percent in Ireland had adopted double-breasting in recent years. Similarly, a study by Marginson et al. (2010: 15) revealed a “discernible trend” in double-breasting amongst multinationals in Britain. For example, of 60 MNCs which both recognised unions at existing plants and had opened new sites in the previous three years, just 18 percent had recognised unions at the new locations whilst 42 percent had not recognised unions. In Ireland, Gunnigle et al. (2009) found that of 53 MNCs that reported the establishment of a new site over the previous five years, 49 percent engaged in double breasting.

In this article, we address three research questions that remain largely unexplored in the literature on double-breasting. The first question concerns employer motives for implementing double-breasting voice and contributes to knowledge on how and why double-breasting emerges. The second question seeks to unpack the nature of the arrangements which double-breasted firms use. Our study moves beyond the existing research, which has simply charted the phenomenon to-date by noting the existence, or absence, of union status across different sites. The third research question is interested in the impact and potential ‘durability’ of double-breasting over time and space. This refers to the ‘micro-politics’ of double-breasting and how practices are played out at firm level, whether the double-breasting arrangement is contested or not and the implications for employees and trade unions. Crucially, these questions require a methodological design capable of capturing actor intent, especially employer motives and worker and union reactions, in order to better explain phenomena (Ferner et al. 2011:182). In this regard, this study uses a qualitative comparative case study design, based on sixteen workplace units of analysis in four separate organisations with operations on the island of Ireland.

The structure of this article is as follows: we begin by reviewing the literature on double-breasting, raising three questions that require empirical investigation. A description of the research approach and the suitability of the case study organisations to address the research questions follow. The article then presents the findings from the case studies. The final section discusses the findings and advances two theoretical propositions generalised from the findings to further knowledge and understanding of double-breasting.

Double-breasting: Theoretical considerations and key issues

The phenomenon of double-breasting refers to the simultaneous use of trade union recognition in some company plants and non-union arrangements in other company locations (Gunnigle et al., 2005). It is distinct from hybrid or dual union and non-union regimes in that the focus is not on comparative practices *within* sites, but rather *across* sites within the same company. The core of the approach means unionised workers have independent collective voice, while employees in non-union sites do not.

Early conceptualisations of double-breasting treated it as a strategic choice, or as evidence of ‘deliberate sequentiality’ on the part of the employer, to avoid unionised wage premiums and terms and conditions by deploying non-union arrangements in newly-acquired business units (Lipskey and Farber, 1976; Ruben, 1985; Rose, 1986; Verma and Kochan, 1985; Northrup, 1995). The approach was sometimes cast as ‘whipsawing’: a situation in which management would play off (unionised) workers at one company plant in relation to another (non-union) site or location. The aim was to attain lower labour costs by strategically separating union and non-union operations, with the explicit objective of removing the union wage mark-up in favour of lower costs at unorganised locations (Allen, 1995). Northrup (1995: 381), for example, proposed that in contrast to the union wage premium, higher fringe benefit costs, less flexibility and alleged productivity gap, “the cost advantages of open-shop

contractors made double-breasting a rational alternative for many union contractors”. This form of anti-unionism is, as Dundon and Gall (2013: 1) note, “a conscious, deliberate decision to undermine and erode hypothetical, potential and actual workplace collective union organisation” that may operate along the suppression-substitution *modus operandi*. Presented as a possible ‘deliberate strategy’, double-breasting may entail managers whipsawing employees in unionised sites to accept concessions to their terms and conditions (Cimini et al., 1993; Dooley, 1994). However, a noticeable gap in understanding is that the potential for and even the extent of such practices remains relatively unexplored in empirical terms.

Later contributions to the double-breasting literature distinguish between those forms of double-breasting which arose from the opening of union-free ‘greenfield sites’, and those which emanated as ‘brownfield sites’ through the acquisition of other firms with established non-union status (Beaumont, 1985; 1987; Beaumont and Townley, 1985; Beaumont and Harris, 1992). Double-breasting in this context is interpreted differently to reflect a practice where “a multi-establishment organization may simultaneously operate establishments on both a union and non-union basis” (Beaumont and Harris, 1992: 268). The assumption of any deliberate intentionality is removed with the motivation left open-ended. As Lamare et al. (2013) observe, double-breasting may arise as a legacy of site acquisition or the different organising activities of workforces at various sites. It may therefore mirror dissimilarities between sites that are wholly white-collar and those where blue-collar workers dominate; or, as in federal systems like Canada, with split jurisdictions over employment regulation it may reflect within-country variation in labour law. In this interpretation, double-breasting arises from a conflux of factors that may, or may not, be related to sidestepping unionisation. This also complements a wider viewpoint within the literature which recognises that the idea of a simple or single model of employer choice in relation to employee voice may not be

straightforward (Marchington et al., 2001; Dundon et al., 2004). A number of factors may impinge on employer options regarding the choice of voice: for example certain regulatory rules, laws, product market circumstances or custom and practice among employees themselves may encourage certain behaviours that would otherwise not occur (Beaumont and Hunter, 2003).

Despite the two streams of conceptualisation, the double-breasting literature has been relatively silent in unveiling the empirical rationales offered by employers as to why double-breasting exists. In one of the very few qualitative studies on double-breasting motives, Gunnigle et al. (2009) outlined how American MNCs often justified double-breasting on the basis of three arguments. First, management felt going non-union would allow them greater freedom in making and implementing operational decisions. Second, management argued that these new sites employed younger, better educated workers who were 'less inclined' to seek union membership. Finally, management were confident they would encounter little union opposition to their decision. The predominant focus of the literature, however, has chiefly revolved around considering the *extent* to which multi-site employers concurrently operate some facilities on a unionised basis, and others on a non-union arrangement, and the propensity for unionised firms to constitute 'greenfield' sites on a union-free footing. As a result, much research on double-breasting has been concerned with identifying the incidence of such systems rather than what has actually occurred within them. Apart from quantitative data about spread and trajectory noted above, evidence is really only beginning to emerge on why double-breasting occurs in the first instance (see Gunnigle et al., 2005; Collings et al., 2008).

For example, recent research has inferred rationales for the existence of double-breasting amongst MNCs through regression analysis (Lamare et al., 2013). Thus, large firms with multiple sites are likely to display double-breasted arrangements. Product heterogeneity

(service delivery) and greater organisational de-centralisation may be linked to an increase in the incidence of double-breasting, insofar as employers are likely to use a wide range of employment arrangements to fit the demands of diverse products. Similarly, location within a firm's production network or supply chain may impose increased pressure on cost and flexibility, with centralised control over Human Resource (HR) practices (Ferner and Almond, 2013), especially if one particular site is participating in upstream integration (i.e. supplying to other sites in the firm). Both intra- and inter-firm specific supply networks might encourage certain sites *within* an organisation to opt for non-union arrangements, particularly for the higher value-added activities such as research and development or new technological production investments. It can also suggest that the way employment relations actors respond to such pressures might not be deterministically uniform: subsidiary managers can often carve out spaces for enhanced autonomy, or in other situations central managers may set patterns of control over HR practice configurations with variation pointing to idiosyncratic adaptability (Belizon et al., 2013). Given the relatively underdeveloped state of knowledge as to why employers, and especially MNC sites, opt for double-breasting, it is appropriate to examine in greater detail the rationales for the practice.

Aside from limited evidence around rationale, a potentially more significant lacuna in the literature on double-breasting is that it remains largely silent on how it unfolds and plays out within an organisational context. Existing knowledge indicates that double-breasting appears to be amenable to survival where local customs or institutional arrangements are accommodating (Lavelle et al., 2010), or where it serves as a fundamental requisite of MNC policy abroad (Collings et al., 2008). Yet a substantive gap in knowledge is how double-breasting unfolds at the organisational level. This might be in terms of how wider national institutional frameworks shape behaviour, the micro-political dynamics of the practice among actors at workplace level (e.g. managers of different plants, employees, and unions), or the

types of employment arrangements that actually characterise the process. Institutional context and the degree of latitude it offers employer discretion is likely to be important insofar as employee representation regimes are typically embedded or influenced by national institutional arrangements (Patmore, 2010). In the context of an Anglo-Saxon type voluntarism, for example, the evolution of double-breasted regimes may accord with wider institutional patterns of limited employment regulation and declining trade union density. Institutional differences between voluntarist economies can also impact double-breasting regimes: for example the existence of statutory trade union recognition legislation in the UK and its absence in the Republic of Ireland. Ultimately, as Lamare et al. (2013) observe, the problem with existing approaches on double-breasting has been the paucity of in-depth case studies in yielding a more comprehensive understanding of single firms' or sets of firms' practice over time, and that involve participation by multiple actors at different levels, including both headquarters and subsidiaries.

There are also good reasons to suspect that the durability of double-breasting may be contingent on micro-political dynamics among employment relations actors. Studies of wage relativities, for example, suggest that workforce comparisons with like-groups can result in conflict should the former feel disadvantaged (Rowthorn, 1980). How perceived disparities in relativities manifest conflict can depend on the power and organisation of workers vis-à-vis their employing firm. For example, dissatisfaction with relativities may result in turnover or effort-shirking where workers experience non-union voice regimes (van den Broek and Dundon, 2012), or strikes and other forms of organised conflict where workers are unionised (Arestis and Skott, 1993). The existence of differences in union vs. non-union status at different plants in a single company may result in relative deprivation among non-union employees who view their union counterparts as enjoying superior representational systems. This may engender perceptions of injustice which in turn trigger collective mobilisation

amongst non-union workers (cf. Kelly, 1998). Gollan (2007) suggests that the durability of non-union arrangements might be contingent on whether employers match wages and conditions compared with unionised workplaces. For example, if the employer, in the non-union plant, reduces wages and conditions (voluntarily or involuntarily) to a lower level than the unionised plants, this might create the condition for union activity. The durability of the non-union side of the double-breasting arrangement, and prospect of unionisation, might then be dependent on management approaches that match or exceed those of the union-based counterpart within the same firm (Gollan, 2007; Kaufman and Taras, 2000; Kaufman, 2013). The practice of double-breasting also poses challenges for unions as it not only diverts work to the non-union sector, but it also, if whipsawing is involved, places considerable pressure on unions to grant concessions so that the unionised plant will remain competitive. Historically in the US construction industry, unions responded to double-breasting through work-preservation clauses and arbitration, as well as unfair labour practice charges under the National Labour Relations Act, even though most of these proved ineffectual (Befort, 1987). The various responses of other organisational stakeholders, notably employees and trade unions, evidently necessitate closer scrutiny so as to consider how double-breasting 'plays out' in practice.

In light of these issues, three core questions present themselves: i) what are employer motives for double-breasting; ii) what type of practices characterise the double-breasting arrangement; and iii) what, if any, are the micro-political implications of double-breasting. Taken together, these research questions contribute knowledge concerning the emergence, form and impact of double-breasting.

Method

Research design

The data in this article is based on four multi-site case study organisations operating in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. As much research on double-breasting involves quantitative survey data reporting the incidence of practice, our research design supports the call for more comparative critical and in-depth case studies to explore the motives and power resource issues underpinning organisational practice (Ferner et al., 2011:182). The inclusion of cases from both sides of the Irish border also offers some institutional comparability. While the two jurisdictions of the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland (NI) are broadly similar as voluntarist liberal market economies, there are differences of relevance. In particular, statutory trade union recognition legislation exists in NI, while in ROI union bargaining and recognition are wholly voluntary. In addition, both the UK (NI) and Irish governments decided to transpose employee voice regulations (aka the European Directive for employee information and consultation) differently, suggesting that the issues concerning institutional and cultural legacies, as Patmore (2010) notes, are potential important contextual conduits shaping the motive and dynamics of how voice arrangements are played out in practice. The multi-case study design ensured evidence from different contextual settings and economic sectors: telecommunications, construction supplies and conglomerates, public services, and catering and hospitality.

Case study contexts

BritCo is a former UK state monopoly that was privatised in the 1980s. The company now operates in more than 170 countries and entered the Irish market through a joint commercial venture with an Irish semi-state and another private-sector organisation, making it the second largest employer in its sector in ROI, with over 2000 employees. Business objectives include

a focussed plan of growth through acquisition in ROI, which led BritCo to purchase some establishments which were non-unionised. These objectives were in stark contrast to the consolidation of business activities (rather than acquisition and growth) in NI, with a focus on maintaining established collective bargaining in union recognised sites in NI. Union density at BritCo in NI is over 90 per cent.

ConcreteCo is headquartered in ROI with operations in 35 countries, employing over 93,000 people worldwide, with 2200 people in Ireland. The company operates in the construction materials supply market, with its Northern Ireland division established through the acquisition of a number of smaller building merchants. Its core business objective is to support semi-autonomous independent trading units in bespoke areas of construction supply, conglomerates, and building materials outlets. Within ROI, *ConcreteCo* is a multi-union company with relatively high union density at around 80 per cent, while in NI *ConcreteCo* is non-unionised across all but one of its NI operations. The one unionised location in the North was the result of a prior union recognition agreement when *ConcreteCo* purchased the company.

TourismCo is a public sector multi-site organisation. Its business objective is based on an all-Ireland remit established under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement (1998) to ‘promote tourism, sport and leisure’. It is jointly managed by the Irish Government and Northern Ireland (Government) Executive. The majority of its 160 employees are based in key source locations such as America, Canada, France, Britain, Germany, Switzerland and Australia (among others). It works closely with two other public sector bodies to promote tourism — Failte Ireland and the Northern Irish Tourist Board. It is headquartered in two offices: one in Coleraine (NI) which is non-unionised employing about 40 staff, and a larger

unionised Dublin (ROI) location employing 120 staff. Union density is around 13 per cent at the unionised ROI office. In the North employees were previously represented by a public sector union.

CateringCo is an American-owned MNC and is regarded as the market leader for ‘business process outsourcing’ in Ireland, covering contract catering, site maintenance and facilities management services. Its Irish headquarters is in Dublin, with sites in most other cities in both NI and ROI. On the island of Ireland it employs over 3500 people in more than 400 locations. *CateringCo*’s business objective is to be the leading outsourced catering and facilities management contractor in Ireland. It provides to client companies a range of outsource support services: catering, security, event management, corporate hospitality, and on-site maintenance facilities in a highly competitive and price-sensitive market. The research focussed on the catering division of the business. In both ROI and NI, workers are employed on a variety of temporary, fixed-term or zero-hours contracts, with relatively high staff turnover. *CateringCo* has a mix of union-recognition and non-union arrangements at different sites on the island of Ireland. The characteristics of the case material is summarised in Table 1.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Data collection

To ensure triangulation, we based the identification and inclusion of the above four as suitable case studies on several criteria. First, we collected data from a spread of private and public and large and smaller organisations. Variability by firm size, sector, unionisation, occupational mix, and business objectives adds a wider scope for generalizability. Second,

preliminary desk research identified organisations in the targeted sectors that, on face validity, had a double-breasting strategy. The principal data-collection instrument thereafter was semi-structured interviews with a total of 112 informants across 16 separate workplaces (see Table 1). We secured access initially through contact with the senior human resource professional in each organisation. On their agreement, we interviewed different informants in order to capture both factual and different subjective perspectives on double-breasting and employee voice practices. Respondents include site managers, workplace shop stewards, non-union representatives and employees. We arranged follow-up contact with relevant external trade union officials where relevant.

In addition, documentary information was available from each case which provided objective data on work practices and background information relating to numbers of employees, occupational classification and union recognition and/or non-recognition. For example, HR policies and personnel manuals provided a detailed overview of the types of voice practices formally available at union and non-union sites. Minutes from joint consultation and work council meetings held between management and union and non-union staff representatives provided data on the issues channelled through the voice system that existed at particular cases and sites. Examples included employee grievances, redundancy concerns, pay and bonus issues, overtime working, grading and performance appraisals (among others).

Data analysis

The analysis of data followed protocols appropriate to our case study design, suggested by Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (2009). Interview transcripts accounted for the bulk of our data. We followed a coding protocol consistent with the core research questions and themes presented in the previous section: employer motives for particular voice schema at separate

sites; variable site-level autonomy and/or conformity to corporate policy; the characteristic of actual double-breasted voice practices at worksite level; the subjective interpretations of actors as to the processes and power dynamics affecting double-breasting; and issues of contestation and tension. In addition to interview data analysis, we used content analysis to examine documentary material. For example, we coded documents in relation to formal voice policy, and contrasted that with processes and practices from interview data. Further coding helped categorise union and non-union policy by company site and location. Finally, documentary analysis identified a range of employee grievances and tensions, as reported in works council and union meeting minutes. The latter gave additional data on possible contestation that the researchers used iteratively with key informants during the semi-structured interview approach. Overall, all members of the research team checked and cross-referenced the coding of both interview reports and documentary results during and after the fieldwork to ensure validity, accuracy, and consistency of interpretation and analysis.

Findings

This section presents the case evidence thematically in relation to the three core research questions concerning: i) the emergence of and motives for double-breasting; ii) the voice practices that characterise double-breasting; and iii), the micro-politics of double-breasting.

I. The emergence of and motives for double-breasting

The motives for double-breasting voice included a mix of factors. For example, double-breasting at BritCo derived from corporate decision-making at the UK headquarters concerning strategies for expansion into the ROI market. The objective was to secure market share in light of Irish government plans to de-regulate the state-monopolised product market. Entry first found expression in a joint commercial venture with the state company prior to

privatisation, progressing to BritCo, post-deregulation, acquiring the joint venture as well as another new indigenous entrant into the market. Both acquisitions had been non-union. In light of the expanding scale of operations in ROI (principally located in Dublin), the close proximity of managerial and technical skills in NI (principally located in Belfast) and the desire to avoid duplication, UK headquarters sought greater streamlining of activities within BritCo operations across the two jurisdictions. This resulted in one overarching organisational unit, called 'BritCo Ireland'. Double-breasting emanated from this merger: it inherited the legacy of high union density plants in NI and newer, non-union operations in ROI.

However, unlike other theoretical propositions (Dundon, 2002; Gall, 2004), union avoidance was not the main or key single motivator for double-breasting voice in this context. Indeed, the employer viewed the unionised side of the double-breasted arrangements in NI positively, but at the same time saw the expansion of BritCo in ROI through acquisition as opening up new opportunities in the design of non-union voice, or an opportunity to consolidate existing non-union arrangements in acquired subsidiaries. Where the union avoidance sentiment (and counter-mobilisation) occurred in BritCo ROI, unions challenged evidence of non-unionism (sub-section III below considers this dynamic).

Likewise, the emergence of double-breasting at CateringCo was associated with business objectives to be the leading catering and facilities management sub-contractor on the island of Ireland. CateringCo headquarters, based in the United States, favoured non-union employment relations on the grounds of labour contract flexibility and an ideological espousal of individualist employment relationships. Despite headquarter preferences for non-unionism, there was considerable local variation, with half of its subsidiaries in ROI, and all but one in NI, operating on a non-union basis. Unionisation existed in some ROI sites, partly as an inherited legacy from commercial acquisition of unionised companies, and partly the

result of a union organising campaign by a leading general union. In ROI, double-breasting in CateringCo was at times a pragmatic adaptation to localised customs that reflected a market/client-driven rationale; what might be termed ‘reverse double-breasting’, insofar as it exemplified a non-union employer occasionally recognising unions in new sites, leading to a patchwork of union and non-union arrangements across different client establishments. To this end double-breasting displayed mimic isomorphic features, as CateringCo units sought to mirror the employment relations architecture that existed within client plants. Local managers explained that this allowed CateringCo to demonstrate a cultural synergy between its own systems and the policies and practices of the client organisation. In part, the approach was influenced by the client firms, some of which informed CateringCo site management of the desirability for non-union arrangements, while others, particularly clients in the public sector, could accommodate union recognition. The HR manager for CateringCo Ireland summed this up as “*going with the flow*” in replicating known client practices. Local management knowledge about the existence of a unionised relationship within a client organisation was therefore important to the decision about union or non-union voice options. One exception to this illustrates the unevenness and complexity of double-breasting as it unfolded across multiple locations of this company. At one large US MNC client, well-known for its non-union status, CateringCo employees joined a union and obtained conditional recognition from management. CateringCo management reluctantly conceded union recognition despite the client’s strong non-union preferences. The site manager explained that recognition was given but on condition that subsequent union-management interactions would be kept as informal as possible to downplay the union’s role at the client site. For example there was no union committee, no facilities provided to the shop steward on the client’s premises and any discussions with management had to take place off site. The manager explained:

[client firm's name] line is if an employee needs a union then they are not doing a good enough job given [client firm's] non-union stance meetings with the union are off-site.

(Site Manager, CateringCo ROI)

The emergence of double-breasting at ConcreteCo revolved around a purposely decentralised managerial arrangement that encouraged a high degree of latitude in which local managers tailored voice schemes according to particular customs and practices at each site. The organisation's Code of Conduct document stipulated that: *"each operating company is responsible for managing all aspects of its own employee relations e.g. pay, pensions, hours of work, local code of conduct, agreements with unions"* and that employment relations policy *"should be in accordance with the local legislation and custom and practice"*. This strategy for plant management autonomy resulted in a patchwork of unionised and non-unionised sites being run in tandem. The majority of ConcreteCo sites in the ROI, for example, are unionised and, indeed, multi-unionism prevailed at several locations: construction had been a strong growth area for union density since the mid-1990s. Unionisation was seen by ROI managers as a normal feature of employment relations and senior management at headquarters level espoused a 'partnership' approach with unions. In contrast, operations in NI were run on an almost entirely non-union basis, although again some exceptions of unionisation existed because of either legacy issues owing to acquisition, or determined by local management preferences. Unlike ROI, an ideological hostility to unionisation was present amongst some senior management in NI and there was a deliberate objective to keep sites union-free insofar as possible.

Double-breasting at TourismCo emerged in a somewhat unique way, in that the key driving force was employees themselves, owing to growing dissatisfaction with existing

union channels of representation. In NI, employees opted-out of the formal joint negotiating machinery and union membership. The primary reason appeared to be a growing pay gap that favoured employees in ROI. Through national partnership agreements in ROI, employees obtained a 40 per cent pay rise over 10 years, compared to a 10 per cent rise for workers in NI over the same timeframe. Although the relevant NI union initially sought pay parity, the employer refused on the grounds it would break unified civil service pay grades negotiated as particular to a sovereign state with its own institutional employment relations system. Employees in NI reported considerable dissatisfaction with the union's inability to address the relative disparity in pay between workers of the same organisation and of the same job grade, but who worked to different political and jurisdictional rules. The result was a union membership refusing to renew subscriptions. One NI employee, and former shop steward, remarked:

The union did not want to pursue our parity pay claim and only did so half-heartedly ... there is no point in staying in a union that would not act for its members

(Employee and former Union Steward, TourismCo NI)

In summary, in three of the four cases (BritCo, CateringCo and ConcreteCo), the overriding motive for double-breasting was a by-product of business objectives related to subsidiary expansion and/or contraction with attendant non-union arrangements diffused, or unionised voice tolerated. Local management preferences at site level proved important in producing this patchwork of arrangements. In TourismCo the origin of double-breasting was not managerially driven at all, but emanated from employee influences. Overall, double-

breasting motives were thus mostly emergent and ad-hoc, rather than strategic and pre-planned.

II. The institutional characteristics of double-breasting

The type of voice arrangements which characterised double-breasting varied in relation to the factors and motives detailed above, typically including direct (individualised) and indirect (collective) practices in both the unionised and non-union work locations. Of broader significance, reported next, are spill-over and legacy issues from the unionised sites affecting behaviours at non-union plants.

At ConcreteCo, unionised voice arrangements (in ROI) operated at national and local levels. National-level structures dealt with negotiation and consultative issues although they were typically ad-hoc and issue-driven. At local level union negotiating arrangements focussed on operational issues such as redundancies, working time and/or problems arising in quarries. Despite established formal bargaining structures, collective negotiation as the dominant mode of interaction between union representatives and employers was in decline. It was evident that collective bargaining had progressively withered over the years and been replaced by consultation, or the simple provision of information. Union stewards regularly complained that management plans were mostly presented as a *fait accompli*:

You get the sense that decisions are already made at a higher level, then the unions are told. Unions don't have real influence, say if new machinery or work practices come in. There is no real participation.

(ConcreteCo Union Steward, Southern Ireland)

Illustrative of this was the process of restructuring and amalgamation of three Southern ConcreteCo companies into one in 2009. Although management advanced that substantial consultation occurred over the transfer of undertakings, a conflicting view was offered by union representatives: *“there was no union consultation whatsoever, no negotiation of the ConcreteCo consolidation”*. Whilst union representatives were conscious of a progressive narrowing of their capacity to affect substantive and procedural matters, influence over the ‘allocation, timing and distribution’ of workforce redundancies was an area that remained resilient and not insignificant for the workers concerned. But the strength of union structures in the Republic were being eroded with a new greenfield administrative centre established in ConcreteCo in 2009. The majority of staff were unionised, although new hires were placed on inferior terms and conditions than those in comparable sites in ROI: working time was extended by 2.5 hours and new work practices were implemented without union negotiation or consultation.

At the NI plants, non-union voice arrangements prevailed through both individual and collective fora. Predominantly, employees raised issues with local managers on an individual basis, although a works committee existed in some sites tailored to specific issues including production, health and safety, and collective workforce grievances. However, these works committees remained haphazard with no coherent election or nomination scheme, and employee representatives ‘handpicked’ by management. The NI HR manager explained that employees were expected to first engage with their own manager on a one-to-one basis, rather than utilise the committees. For example:

Not all divisions have a works committee. It’s not a set arrangement.

Whether it exists or not could be due to demand, or tradition, or because it

is seen as a good idea by management. Each division is different in terms of how they communicate and consult”

(HR Manager, ConcreteCo NI)

The character of double-breasting voice at BritCo reflected union marginalisation, even in those sites with a long-standing tradition of collective bargaining. In unionised plants, joint consultative committees met twice a year in NI and these were complemented by monthly site-wide meetings. These latter meetings were predominately managerially-led and consultative in orientation. Indeed union representatives in NI tended to highlight a growing marginalisation within the company and an evident lack of power to influence managerial decision-making. Concession bargaining and give-backs to management had been a dominant feature of management-union relations in NI since the recession. Consequently, union representatives regarded their role as mostly consultative and as ‘sounding boards’ for managerial initiatives. As one union representative summarised:

Do we have any influence on management? Honest truth? Very little ... any changes we have been making or any gains we’ve made for our members has been small. It’s going to be implemented nearly to the letter of what we first received.

(Union Shop Steward, BritCo NI)

The voice arrangements at non-union ROI sites were noticeably absent, aside from occasional team briefings. However, in pre-empting institutional regulations for European-wide worker rights for company information and consultation, management established a new non-union employee representation (NER) forum. Following the regulatory push for

employee voice, the NER forum was further promoted by management in response to a union organising campaign at the non-union plants in ROI. As a result, a re-constituted NER forum subsequently became the centrepiece of the firm's voice practices in the Republic [discussed below in III].

In CateringCo, the voice arrangements almost universally gravitated towards direct and informal communications. This was true even in unionised sites where shop stewards were present. Union committee meetings for example were largely absent. There was no collective bargaining at local site level, and wages and conditions were set by national (head office) management. As such, union representation at site level was heavily dependent on the commitment of the shop steward. Union respondents explained that they struggled to maintain union status, as local managers changed on such a regular basis that replacement managers would have to be reminded that union recognition existed at these sites. Indeed the pattern of shallow voice arrangements observed to prevail in the non-union plants, such as notice boards, team-briefings and informal face-to-face dialogue, was typically replicated in the formally unionised sites.

Finally, TourismCo also exhibited some broader variation in terms of voice practices deployed across its double-breasted sites. Within the unionised site in Dublin, an indirect representative forum, the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC), met four times a year. The JNCC did not deal with pay negotiating issues, which were addressed at national level in line with other public sector employments. Aside from the JNCC, the employer had a wide range of direct information and consultation mechanisms in the unionised site, mostly concerned with providing top-down communications from management to employees. Relative to the JNCC, these latter mechanisms tended to be more to the fore of how employees claimed to experience voice in ROI; indeed few employees participating in the study were aware of the JNCC. Union membership in ROI was low at 13

per cent (compared to 70 per cent density in the Irish public sector as a whole). In NI, having resigned membership of the union, employees did not participate on any representative forum, and relied on direct information and communication mechanisms, typically email and team briefings.

In summary, the institutional characteristics of double-breasted voice systems across the cases point to two key features. First, despite the formal union/non-union divide between double-breasted sites, in all four cases the unionised sites appeared to increasingly confine the unions' influence to information and consultative structures. Bargaining in the unionised sites of BritCo and ConcreteCo had been subject to marginalisation, and at CateringCo union status remained fragile and prone to erosion and managerial by-passing. In TourismCo, the union remained marginal to decision-making with voice captured by a range of employer-driven direct information practices. Secondly, whilst the institutional characteristics of non-union voice in the union-free plants evidenced a patchwork of different approaches, apart from the deliberate NER in BritCo, the arrangements remained ad-hoc and predominantly individualist and informal in design.

III. The micro-political dynamics and potential durability of double-breasting voice

In this section, we consider how double-breasting 'played out' across the respective organisational contexts. An important contribution in this regard includes the dynamic of employees themselves as key agents of change and contestation, along with the impact of double-breasting voice on union organisation within the firm.

The streamlining of business operations into a single unit of BritCo Ireland, and the resulting double-breasted characteristics of employee voice, proved to be a contentious dynamic at non-union plants in ROI. In particular, workers in ROI believed that staff in NI enjoyed superior terms and conditions of employment because of their exclusive union

bargaining conditions. Such perceptions hardened when they realised that redundancy was dealt with in an entirely different way in each particular double-breasted site. In NI unionised sites, there existed a negotiated 'no compulsory redundancy' agreement, but there was no comparable protection for non-union workers at ROI plants. Employee awareness of the apparent union mark-up conferred on unionised workers stemmed from increasing interaction between the Belfast (unionised) and Dublin (non-union) sites that evolved from the integration of an all-Ireland business objective. For example, project teams and training days facilitated a degree of informal information-sharing and 'spill-over' between (unionised) engineers in NI and their (non-unionised) counterparts in ROI: the former enjoying a collectively-negotiated work pattern with shift premium and defined start and finish times, whereas those engineers under the non-union regime had to be more flexible and work 'beyond their scheduled hours' to finish a job.

The unfolding of these double-breasting issues at BritCo engendered a growing sense of injustice. This led to a union organising drive in one of the non-union plants in ROI, which subsequently spread to another (call centre operation) non-union site. Refusal by management to recognise the union at the non-union locations in ROI, while actively supporting collective bargaining in NI, prompted a union campaign targeting specifically BritCo's double-breasting arrangement as 'anti-union'. The union president remarked:

It seems under the [BritCo] business model they will treat all of their customers the same but discriminate against you if you work for them in the Republic of Ireland. We now have the ridiculous situation that if you are one inch on one side of the border BritCo will recognise your right to be represented by a Union but if you are an inch on the other side of the border it will discriminate against you.

(President, Sectoral Union)

In response, management re-constituted the previously defunct NER forum noted in II above, initially designed to meet the regulatory requirements of European regulations for employee information and consultation. The re-vamped NER, renamed ‘BritCo *Vocal*’, was now promoted as an active engine for change with meetings planned every four weeks, including employee representatives from across all grades of staff in non-union sites. The hot-beds of union activity were each allowed three non-union representatives. In addition, the items open for consultation were extended in scope and included claims for parity of redundancy conditions between union (NI) and non-union (ROI) plants, employee input into a new staff handbook of HR rules and procedures, and a series of other employee grievances. The employee representatives on the BritCo NER forum achieved a number of concessions by drawing comparisons between the redundancy terms in the unionised NI and those in the non-union ROI sites. While management refused to extend the no compulsory redundancy agreement to non-union plants, significant increases were made to the redundancy terms for employees in these parallel non-union plants. The union substitution tactics of the NER forum, complemented by the employer’s steadfast determination to refuse recognition in non-union plants in ROI, were partially successful in undermining the momentum of the union recognition campaign. The union was unable to secure recognition, pointing to a lack of statutory support in ROI relative to the legislation available to workers in NI. Similarly, BritCo senior management positively commented on the permissive context as an enabling force in their desire to maintain union-free plants. By the conclusion of the field research, the union had nonetheless managed to expand its density at the non-union plants to roughly 30 per cent of the workforce. However, the employer remained wedded to a double-breasted model.

At ConcreteCo, perceived relativities regarding the double-breasting practice in NI proved contentious and mirrored in part a whipsawing approach. In NI, workers within unionised plants saw the creation of new non-union sites as a threat and held the view that union members were ‘under-siege’ from a regional management determined to undermine unionised conditions. Yet the unions perceived themselves as too weak to counter management’s decision to create parallel non-union arrangements, citing low membership, high unemployment and employer capacity for emasculating union strength. In one (acquired) unionised plant, local NI managers decided to de-recognise the union. In this and one other non-union plant, workers were informed that both sites would be closed, with production moving to a new greenfield (non-union) facility. Workers in both plants were offered redundancy, or the option of applying for a job at the new greenfield site. Furthermore, workers in the greenfield site would have to accept a new contract of employment as well as terms and conditions that were lower than was the case in the former unionised plant, such as customary bonus payments. One employee, from the former unionised site in the NI, brought a legal claim against the company which sought to preserve union recognition and collective bargaining pay norms. The claim was lost. Such issues are highly insightful in exhibiting the micro-politics and dynamics surrounding the unfolding of double-breasting and the nuances of actions that play one group of workers, typically unionised, off against another group at a non-union location. Senior management in ConcreteCo NI were particularly aware of the flexibility afforded to them by virtue of union absence and dismissal of union power. Issues regarding redundancy and reducing working hours were now easier for management to execute. Indeed, some managers at union-recognised plants in ROI spoke with admiration about how their non-union (NI) managerial counterparts could close a site and displace a workforce with relative ease; in one instance in less than six weeks. When NI management closed down the aforementioned unionised site it

had acquired, where three unions were present, the process was felt by management to be more complicated because of collective representation:

“Their [union-negotiated] contract of employment is miles away from the contract of employment that we have [in non-union sites], because of...the consultation with trade unions. They write everything in their contract of employment ... Criminal from an employer perspective. You couldn't temporarily lay people off without a change to the contract of employment,...Their [unionised] contract is six pages. [The non-union] contract is two”.

(HR Manager, ConcreteCo NI)

Finally, and in contrast to the high degree of contention that unfolded around double-breasting at BritCo and to a lesser extent ConcreteCo, the micro-politics at both CateringCo and TourismCo remained largely uncontroversial amongst employees and unions, with a resultant deeper durability to the reported practices. In CateringCo this appeared to be related to localised self-management of separate individual sites, many of which operated largely without reference to each other. Consequently, employees at the various non-union plants were typically unaware of the employment arrangements at other (unionised) sites. Added to a high level of staff turnover generally, and the prevalence of transient foreign labour, relatively low wages, and zero-hour contracts, the issue of double-breasting faced little if any challenge from unions or employees. With a global corporate culture espousing the virtues of individualism, shop stewards remained concerned with holding their position within their own site rather than looking to mobilise membership resources elsewhere. Of greater consequence for the unfolding of double-breasting arrangements at different CateringCo sites

was the high degree of localised management latitude in determining whether union or non-union status prevailed, but once this decision was made the practice was a *fait accompli*. Similarly, double-breasting unfolded in a relatively unproblematic manner at TourismCo, although the eventual regime was driven by employee concerns regarding pay parity and dissatisfaction with union representation rather than employer objectives per se. A preference for individualised communications and non-union voice in NI reflected a different dynamic among worker attitudes. For example, younger employees who were recruited directly from the labour market rather than being transferred from other public services entered the company with a different mind-set towards unionisation. These younger employee respondents spoke of a positive ‘corporate culture’ and felt management satisfactorily addressed worker concerns without the need for union representation. Combined with the pay parity issue and changing employee attitudes that favoured more individualised HR practices, union voice diminished and withered away in the North.

In summary, how double-breasting ‘plays out’ across the case studies provides two main lessons. Double-breasting was perceived by employees to be unfavourable to their employment status and was actively contested at BritCo and ConcreteCo, albeit to different degrees. In CateringCo and TourismCo, however, the practice of double-breasting went largely unchallenged. The existence of employee knowledge shared across sites engendered a perception of relative deprivation among a dispersed workforce which, in turn, led to the mobilisation of opposition and a challenge to the durability of double-breasting, in BritCo and ConcreteCo. The absence of these dynamics in CateringCo and TourismCo ensured that double-breasting arrangements remained much more durable.

Discussion

The findings presented above both confirm and, significantly, go beyond existing knowledge on double-breasted voice regimes. In demonstrating this, we discuss the three core research questions posed earlier in light of the above evidence: what are the motives for double-breasting; what practices characterise the double-breasting arrangement; and what, if any, are the micro-political implications of double-breasting.

Considering the matter of motives and emergence, the literature to date has tended to point scholarship in two competing directions. First, the ‘deliberate-sequentiality’ idea positions double-breasting as a deliberate strategic ploy to whipsaw (older) unionised sites against (newer) non-unionised locations (Northrup, 1995). A second direction saw double-breasting as less strategic, and could include those sites where unionised firms acquired non-unionised sites with particular business objectives of growth through either greenfield expansion or brownfield acquisition (Beaumont and Harris, 1992; Collings et al., 2008). The data from the cases presented in this article is broadly consistent with the latter, which we term the ‘*emergence through expansion*’ thesis. For example, at BritCo, CateringCo and ConcreteCo double-breasting emerged as a by-product of firm expansion and acquisition. Whilst the evidence supports the view of double-breasting as less strategic, the findings also demonstrate various important firm-level contingencies in explaining how double-breasting emerged. Uneven mixtures of corporate decision-making and site-level management autonomy are crucial variables in explaining double-breasting in BritCo, CateringCo and ConcreteCo. Site-level management autonomy was pronounced in shaping the patchwork of arrangements that emerged and from which, in the majority of instances, pragmatic considerations vis-à-vis union status held sway. Accommodating inherited legacies (BritCo and ConcreteCo) and pragmatically assuaging clients (CateringCo) therefore patterned site-level management behaviour. This supports the position that in managing employment

relations, employers will tend to maintain status quo arrangements rather than jeopardise equilibriums or undertake path-breaking initiatives (Pierson, 2000). Importantly, with employment relations being of a second- or third-order concern, factors sustaining or expanding firm profitability will tend to dominate (Boxall and Purcell, 2011). As a result, double-breasting and wider employment relations issues tend to be '*muddled through*' (Sisson, 1995) when, and as, they arise. Such a tendency can also explain why union encroachments were resisted in some of the non-union sites across the case companies: managers managing without unions tend to prefer remaining non-union unless coerced to do otherwise (Dundon and Rollinson, 2004). Finally, on the matter of motives and emergence, it is noteworthy that TourismCo did not fit neatly into either the 'deliberate-sequentiality' or 'emergence through expansion' theses. It represents something of an anomaly whereby double-breasting emerged due to workers withdrawing support from the union in an otherwise unionised company: a sort of 'reverse' double-breasting that was not employer-driven per se, but shaped in part by workers themselves.

Second, in terms of voice practices that characterise double-breasting, differences that might be expected between union and non-union sites did exist in all cases. Indirect and collective voice schemes were features of union sites and, unsurprisingly, these tended to be less prevalent in non-unionised counterparts. However, dissimilarities were noticeably absent in CateringCo, with a convergence of informal and direct voice being the norm across sites, regardless of union or non-union status. Of note is that whilst indirect (collective) union-led representation existed in the unionised plants of BritCo NI, ConcreteCo ROI and TourismCo ROI, these co-existed with, and in some cases were challenged by, an array of employer-driven direct (individual) schemes for information and communication that straddled both non-union and unionised sites. Similarly, pressures on the potency of union-based arrangements did exist, caused mostly by a general employer power enabled by conditions of

recession. In unionised sites of BritCo and ConcreteCo, unions reported tactics of being sidelined and being subject to downward communication in a general context of ‘give back’ concessions. Similarly, unions in TourismCo operated somewhat at the margins of a managerially-driven system of information and consultation. This suggests that even in formally unionised sites, the risk of ‘hollow-shell’ representation ran large in an environment of union weakness. The presence of formal union recognition is thus not an indicator of the robustness of union channels, and more detailed and nuanced qualitative interpretations can enhance understanding of the character of double-breasting practices over time and space.

Third, the ‘micro-political’ implication of double-breasting was especially significant in advancing what can be labelled the ‘*spill-over effect*’ thesis. A key issue relates to cross-site comparability and the generation of perceptions of unfairness, injustice and inequity. Evident across all four cases are networks which enable comparisons between sites, or the lack thereof, which affected the durability of double-breasted voice arrangements. In BritCo, with its unitary cross-border structure, and staff interaction across the different union and non-union sites, instability emerged in the double-breasted arrangement. In turn, the employer tried to minimise this instability by re-asserting and formalising union-substitution techniques in non-union plants. The interesting, if somewhat potentially unusual case of reverse double-breasting at TourismCo, was similarly brought about by a ‘spill-over’ dynamic. The direction of comparison in TourismCo, however, ran unfavourably from union to non-union rather than non-union to union, as it did in BritCo. In CateringCo ‘spill-over’ did not take place. Sites operated with autonomy and without reference to each other, with employees largely ignorant of the voice arrangements at other plants. In ConcreteCo, sites also displayed relatively autonomous and independent organisational structures, although in NI, workers in unionised sites were aware of, but unable to challenge, due to inadequate power, double-breasted arrangements. These findings indicate that the durability of double-breasting will tend to be

challenged where there is cross-site interaction between workers themselves; where perceptions of injustice and/or relative deprivation emerge; and when employees can mobilise the resources to challenge double-breasted arrangements. Where such interactions, perceptions and (crucially) mobilising resources are absent, double-breasting will be more durable. A further implication of the open-ended element to the micro-politics of double-breasting suggests that the arrangement need not be entirely treated as a one-way street with regard to union marginalisation. Depending on the particular mix of context, institutional arrangements and managerial motives, double-breasting may in fact be conducive to stimulating unionisation as much as it can result in its erosion within a firm. Depending on the prevailing context, it is not inevitable that double-breasting will result in union substitution per se. As a summary overview, the core findings and case context factors are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

As with many case study approaches there are limitations. One caution is whilst cross-sector variability can aid greater comparability, it can also miss out sector-specific influences which might be important in shaping outcomes. The methodological focus on events at a single moment in time can also limit the extent of generalizability to contexts. A further limitation is that as trade unions can adopt heterogeneous voice strategies with multiple employers, the experience of double-breasting at one union plant may not transfer to a different type in other settings, say general or craft union systems. However such limitations should be balanced by recognition that the research design was robust to capture intent, employer motive and build theoretical and explanatory power, not measure prevalence. In short, the research is about understanding a given social phenomenon and explaining the processes shaping double-breasting.

Taken together, the findings and subsequent discussion contribute two new theoretical propositions on the ‘motives’ and ‘durability-contestation’ of double-breasting that advance knowledge and offer a template for future testing in research. First, concerning motives for double-breasting, the evidence advances the ‘*emergence through expansion*’ proposition: this maintains that ‘emergence through expansion’ logic is likely to populate cases of double-breasting motives given that firm expansion across sites is driven by first-order concerns of profitability and growth rather than second- or third-order concerns on union status and employment relations. In other words ‘*emergence through expansion*’, and not ‘*deliberate sequentiality*’, will tend to be the primary motive for double-breasting regimes in firms. This proposition offers important insights for future researchers and policy makers concerned with employer motives for double-breasting voice in other national and multinational contexts.

Second, evidence relating to the limited durability and potential contestation of double-breasting advances a ‘*spill-over effect*’ proposition, drawn from analysis concerning the unfolding of practices and the micro-political dynamics of the cases. In other words ‘*double-breasting will tend to be contested by employees where there is: (a) cross-site interaction between union and non-union employees; (b) perceptions of relative deprivation among employees(unions); and (c), the resources to mobilise employees (unions) to challenge the arrangement.*’ These two propositions, generated from the case data, provide hypothetical frameworks for future research on double-breasting.

Conclusion

This article contributes to the growing phenomenon of double-breasting employment relations and employee voice in a number of ways. First, it advances multiple motives and various employer rationales for double-breasting. In particular, corporate business objectives and degrees of site management autonomy offer support for the ‘*emergence through*

expansion' thesis. This advances knowledge that the motives for double-breasting are more than static binaries around union substitution and/or suppression. Second, using a qualitative comparative case study methodology, we are able to complement quantitative studies by offering a deep and rich analysis of actor intentions and behaviours at the workplace. The unfolding of employer, union and employee actions can shape the institutional character of employee voice under double-breasted workplace regimes. Third, the micro-politics of double-breasting advances a '*spill-over effect*' thesis, predicating that contestation rather than embedded durability is a likely outcome of double-breasting arrangements under certain conditions. Importantly, these propositions allow for future researchers to add to, refine and develop theory. As previously noted in the discussion, the limitations of the study included the small number of cases that may restrict generalizability. Future research offers great potential to add to, test, and expand the theoretical propositions advanced in this article from more longitudinal and sector-specific studies.

Funding

This study was supported by a bilateral research grant from the Irish Research Council (IRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (grant number: RES-062-23-1139).

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Table 1: Case study organisations

Case	Sector	N sites Northern Ireland	N sites Republic of Ireland	N respondents
BritCo	Service & Manufacturing (<i>telecommunications</i>)	1	2	6 managers 3 union officials 4 non-union reps 13 employees n=26
CateringCo	Hospitality (<i>catering & hospitality</i>)	3	4	17 managers 3 union reps 27 employees n=47
ConcreteCo	Manufacturing (<i>construction conglomerates</i>)	1	3	8 managers 3 union reps 1 EWC rep 8 employees n= 20
TourismCo.	Services (<i>leisure; public sector</i>)	1	1	6 managers 3 union reps 10 employees n=19
		16 site locations		total n = 112

Table 2: Summary of research findings by case

	Cases			
	BritCo	CateringCo	ConcreteCo	TourismCo
Emergence of/motives for double-breasting	<p>Double-breasting emerges from post-merger inherited legacy</p> <p>Senior management express preference for non-unionism where possible.</p>	<p>Double-breasting emerges from post-acquisition inherited legacies; in some sites driven by client relations</p> <p>Senior management express preference for non-unionism</p>	<p>Double-breasting determined by local management preferences.</p> <p>Senior management express preference for 'union partnership' in ROI; senior management express preference for non-unionism in NI</p>	<p>Double-breasting emerges from employee dissatisfaction with/withdrawal from union in NI</p> <p>Senior management express preference for 'union partnership'</p>
Institutional characteristics of double-breasting	<p>Voice in non-union sites characterised by non-union employee representation and management-led communications</p> <p>Union-led collective voice prevalent in unionised sites; evidence of weakening union influence in unionised sites; consultation rather than negotiation dominating</p>	<p>Voice in non-union sites characterised by informal one-to-ones and management-led communication</p> <p>Voice in unionised sites replicate non-union sites; union structures weak in recognised sites; union representatives often by-passed</p>	<p>Voice in non-union sites characterised by informal one-to-ones and management-led communication; Representative committees for specific operational issues (production, health and safety)</p> <p>Union-led collective voice prevalent in unionised sites; evidence of weakening union influence in unionised sites; consultation rather than negotiation dominating</p>	<p>Voice in non-union site characterised by informal one-to-ones and management-led communication</p> <p>Mixture of union-led collective voice, informal one-to-ones and management led-communication in unionised site</p>
Micro-political implications of double-breasting	<p>Double-breasting challenged by employees; challenge driven by awareness of double-breasted practices and perceived inequity; management reform voice arrangements in non-union sites in response</p>	<p>Double-breasting unchallenged by employees; employees unaware of voice arrangements/union status in other sites and/or low level of union demand</p>	<p>Double-breasting unchallenged by employees; employees aware of double-breasted sites in NI and ROI but lack of power to challenge management preferences</p>	<p>Double-breasting emerges from employees resigning from union in NI; employees in non-union site satisfied with non-union voice</p>

Acknowledgement: The work was funded under a bilateral research grant from the Irish Research Council (IRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) [RES-062-23-1139].

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