

THE MANY MEANINGS OF COOPERATION IN THE EMPLOYMENT  
RELATIONSHIP AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Cooperation in the employment relationship continues to be a widely-lauded goal, but academics, practitioners and policymakers rarely define the concept or analyse systematically its variants. This is problematic because a lack of clarity is a significant barrier to academic discourse and practical implementation in many organizations and countries. This paper therefore carefully develops a framework that results in six key perspectives on cooperation rooted in five assumptions. In addition to fostering a deeper understanding of cooperation, these six perspectives can be used to theorise alternative employment relations paradigms when cooperation rather than conflict is viewed as the central construct. Moreover, a dynamic analysis of these six perspectives adds new insights to understanding the challenges of achieving and sustaining truly cooperative regimes, while also highlighting the need to go beyond structures and practices by incorporating the role of ideas in analyses of the success or failure of cooperative efforts.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict and cooperation are at the heart of employment relations, theoretically and in practice. But the understanding of these concepts is uneven. Amongst scholars, conflict is more deeply theorised, with different paradigms distinguished by their assumptions about employment relationship conflict, not cooperation (Fox 1973, 1974; Budd and Bhave 2008; Heery 2016). In contrast, practitioners and policy makers are more likely to put cooperation at the centre of their analysis. In both realms, however, ‘cooperation’ tends to be moulded to fit each individual’s own views without defining it, including reducing it to mean the lack, or opposite, of conflict. The result is inconsistency and confusion, creating a barrier to productive academic discourse and hampering both the development of effective public policy and the implementation of cooperation in practice. Consequently, our starting premise is a need for more attention to the concept of cooperation and its many meanings.

In the most generic use of the term ‘cooperation’, every employment relationship involves cooperation to the extent that the parties are participating in that relationship. But we find this unhelpful because it does not recognise the sense of working together harmoniously that many consider central to the meaning of cooperation. Moreover, the concept of cooperation is (perhaps surprisingly) complex, leading to many, often competing, perspectives on what cooperation means and how it can or should be advanced within the employment relationship. In the context of such diversity, we adopt a broad definition and then turn to a systematic exploration of different meanings, manifestations, causes, and consequences within its boundaries.

We argue that the various meanings attributed to cooperation are rooted in underlying values and assumptions and we explore the alternative views using the well-known concept of ‘frames of reference’. As noted by Fox (1974: 271) many years ago, observers and actors alike ‘perceive and define social phenomena’ through frames of reference and, in turn, ‘their

perceptions and definitions determine their behaviour' (also, Cornelissen and Werner 2014; Walsh 1995). The standard approach to frames of reference in employment relations, which identifies three (Fox 1973, 1974; Heery 2016) or four (Budd and Bhawe 2008) key frames of reference, is conflict-centric (Avgar and Stacey 2014).<sup>1</sup> In contrast, we argue that six frames of reference are needed to adequately theorise alternative perspectives on cooperation. These frames are important for understanding views on cooperation held by scholars, practitioners, workers, and policymakers. We make an additional conceptual contribution by crafting the many meanings of cooperation into a 'cooperation curve'. Compared to the relatively static approach embedded in frames of reference analyses, this curve allows for a dynamic analysis that uniquely reveals the fragility of the two main forms of genuine cooperation.

Practically, the improved understanding that flows from our approach to cooperation helps to overcome some of the difficulties of achieving and sustaining cooperation in the employment relationship. While there are many structural barriers to cooperation, emphasised in much of the literature (e.g. Cooke 1990; Dobbins and Dundon 2017), our contribution revives Fox's (1974) insight that the attitudes and behaviours of the parties also matter. In particular, the pursuit of cooperation is more likely to succeed if the parties' perceptions of cooperation are aligned. By providing a clear, comprehensive account of the many meanings of cooperation, our framework can help policy makers and practitioners recognise the potential dissonance that can come from unrecognised values and assumptions. More positively, by enabling a more coherent account of cooperation, the parties will be able to more clearly articulate their visions for the employment relationship and develop the processes and structures to most effectively achieve and sustain their shared ambitions. Our approach, then,

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1. Cradden (2018) also embraces frames of reference in theorising what he labels 'cooperation' and 'conflict' in the employment relationship. But his analysis is more about compliance and acceptance rather than reciprocal collaboration, so this represents a very different line of inquiry.

reveals the importance of aligning stakeholder visions of cooperation, rather than relying solely on processes and structures for achieving and sustaining cooperation.

An additional practical contribution comes from our ‘cooperation curve’. This cooperation curve illustrates that workers and their representatives as well as employers and their representatives all face pressures which threaten genuinely cooperative relationships, resulting in them ‘sliding down’ from cooperation at the top of the curve towards more adversarial, or at least more self-interested, relationships on either side. Our framework therefore reveals that the central tension within cooperation is the duality between mutuality and self-interest. While institutional configurations can affect the sharpness of this duality, presenting the forces at work in diagrammatic form helps practitioners to see how easily mutuality is undermined unless both sides take some degree of responsibility for addressing the other side’s interests and commit effort and resources to the cooperative venture. Moreover, this effort must be sustained, or cooperation may gradually decline in a process we call entropy. Our curve additionally makes clear that it can be management or labour that is responsible for failing to achieve genuine cooperation. This is a more nuanced approach than critical perspectives, which blame employers for the lack of cooperation, and managerialist perspectives, which blame trade unions and workers. It is also more nuanced than debates that tend to see cooperation as always present, or never possible or wise. Rather, cooperation is a complicated concept and practice that requires careful examination and mindful action.

## **2. THE WIDE EMBRACE BUT LACK OF DEFINITION OF COOPERATION**

We start with some examples where cooperation—whether phrased as ‘workplace cooperation,’ ‘employee cooperation,’ ‘labour-management cooperation,’ or in other ways—is discussed, and often embraced, by a wide range of commentators in diverse contexts. To provide a few practical examples from quite different contexts, a conservative, largely anti-union employer association in Australia claims that underpinning all its activities is ‘...the

fundamental belief in direct, cooperative and mutually rewarding employment relationships. [Our association] believes that such relationships at the enterprise level are the best way to achieve efficient and productive workplaces' (AMMA 2007). A Volkswagen executive in America stated that 'The Volkswagen Group is proud of its record of cooperation and co-determination between employees, management and the communities in which we live and work...it is a business model that helped to make Volkswagen the second largest car company in the world' (Chattanooga.com, February 8, 2014).

Public policy makers also champion cooperation. The European Union's Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, for example, boasted about a report that demonstrated the growth of employer-union cooperation: 'We are seeing more and more new forms of cooperation between European employers and trade unions which bring concrete results for working people across the EU. In the evolving world of work, social partners are ideally placed to promote adaptability and to take measures for quality employment' (European Commission 2006). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) promotes cooperation in many domains, including its high profile 'Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises' (SCORE) initiative, which is a modular training program focusing on developing 'cooperative relations at the workplace'. Cooperation is also lauded in national public policy and therefore central to labour legislation in many countries. For example, cooperation has been a key object in the main labour laws of Australia for decades, irrespective of the political complexion of the government of the time (Stewart et al. 2014). Indeed, in 2018 the Australian Minister for Jobs and Industrial Relations applauded previous Labor and Liberal governments for helping "Australia move towards more co-operative, productive and fair workplaces" while declaring that the "common denominator" of industrial relations policy is a shared belief in "an economy that supports cooperation" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, October 23, 2018). Few of these

practitioner/policy commentaries offer any definitions, but it is unlikely they all mean the same thing when they applaud cooperation in the employment relationship.

Within academic circles, there is a long tradition of industrial relations research focusing on cooperation and related concepts. In the USA, John Commons (1919) wrote about ‘industrial goodwill’, while Kaufman (2008: 329) argues more broadly that ‘cooperation’ was the ‘single most used word’ in American debates about industrial relations in the 1920s (see also Jacoby 1983). During the 1940s and 1950s, the National Planning Association published a series of studies on ‘industrial peace’ in the context of collective bargaining (e.g. Golden and Parker 1955), while later accounts focused on ‘integrative’ or ‘cooperative’ bargaining (Walton and McKersie 1965). More recent accounts, such as the ‘mutual gains enterprise’ (Kochan and Osterman 1994), focus on the cooperative process and especially its implications for organisational performance and employee rewards (e.g. Kochan et al. 2009). McLeod (1990) goes deeper than most in identifying leftist, centrist, and rightist views on cooperation, but the underlying bases for these perspectives are not explored.

The British literature relating to cooperation is less extensive, although ‘joint consultation’ became an important policy and research topic during and immediately after the world wars (Clegg and Chester 1954; Hall and Purcell 2012). Apart from one study of ‘industrial peace’ in the 1970s (Goodman et al. 1977), cooperation did not again become a central focus of research until a stream of projects on union-management ‘partnerships’ that resulted from their promotion by the Blair Labour government (e.g. Stuart and Martinez Lucio 2005; Johnstone, Akers, and Wilkinson 2009). We could find no clear or widely-accepted definition of workplace cooperation in this literature. In a different vein, Cradden (2018) seeks to model when cooperation or conflict will characterise the employment relationship, but in his usage ‘cooperation’ is worker ‘compliance with rules and incentives’ (p. 50). As in practitioner usage, ‘cooperation’ is much used but often in very different ways.

There is also a long history of research in management and human resource management in both the USA and Britain that reflects in one way or another on cooperation. In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Taylor (1911: 26) argued that ‘...close, intimate, personal cooperation between the management and the men (sic) is of the essence of modern scientific or task management’. Analyses of the emergence in the 1980s of the human resource management approach to managing employees is another example in which cooperation is treated as important:

A key objective of new management strategies and reform of the employment relationship was to ‘win the hearts and minds of employees’ and to secure their cooperation and support of new business objectives. The popular cliché ‘people are our most important asset’ is indicative of organisational recognition that control and compliance is often insufficient for survival, and that the active cooperation and commitment of employees is a valuable resource offering the key to achieving a ‘competitive edge’ (Boyd 2001: 438).

More recently, similar preoccupations can be found in writings on ‘high commitment workplaces’, ‘high involvement organisations’ and ‘employee engagement’ (Beer 2009; Truss et al. 2014), but again, despite the widespread support for and appeal to the virtues of cooperation, we could find no serious attempt in the managerialist literature to clearly define cooperation or develop systematic analysis of its component parts.

### **3. DEFINING COOPERATION AND ITS KEY ASSUMPTIONS**

Our definition of cooperation is a simple one: ‘*working together to the same end*’. Cooperation in the employment relationship is therefore defined as ‘managers, workers, and their representatives, if any, working together towards the same end’. This broad definition, however, needs qualification and amplification. First, ‘working together’ involves on-going ‘relationships’ that operate over a period of time rather than specific ‘events’ or ‘transactions’. These relationships involve interaction between ‘managers, workers and their representatives, if any’, but this leaves considerable space for variation about ‘who’ is involved in cooperation. In particular, the role of worker representatives is a key point of differentiation among

alternative perspectives. Our definition also leaves open questions about ‘the same end’ that is being pursued through cooperation. The mutuality that is associated with cooperation confers benefit to each party and some responsibility by each party for achieving the goals of ‘other’ parties. But the nature of these goals, the level of mutual benefit, and the degree of responsibility for others’ goals are all contested issues. Much of the literature on workplace cooperation, for example, argues that deep cooperative relationships involve engagement by the parties on a wide rather than narrow range of issues, but it’s not always clear that these issues include the distinct goals of both parties. Finally, the definition says nothing about ‘how’ the parties work together: what are the structures and processes of cooperation? This silence allows different perspectives to privilege different mechanisms.

Our simple definition, then, is useful for thinking about the key dimensions of cooperation, but by itself does not distinguish alternative perspectives on cooperation. It is therefore only a starting point for a systematic consideration of different assumptions, beliefs, and perceptions of cooperation in the employment relationship.

Our deeper analysis of cooperation begins with Budd’s typology of values, assumptions and theories underlying industrial relations (Budd and Bhawe 2008; Befort and Budd 2009). This analysis, which expands upon Fox’s earlier work (1969, 1973, 1974), identifies four main perspectives: egoist, unitarist, pluralist and critical. We argue, however, that much of this previous conceptual work has been preoccupied with understanding conflict in the employment relationship rather than cooperation (more broadly, see Avgar and Owens 2014). A focus on cooperation rather than conflict leads us to need to split the pluralist and unitarist categories, creating a total of six perspectives required to understand the full range of views on cooperation. Each perspective’s overarching view of cooperation within the employment relationship is presented in Table 1. It is clear that the six views on cooperation are different from each other, and only two of them actually meet our definition of cooperation. Table 1 will



be more fully explained in conjunction with a discussion of the key elements of cooperation that distinguish these views.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Together, these perspectives constitute a typology or taxonomy, which is ‘a classification scheme designed for a particular purpose that groups together events or phenomena on the basis of similar characteristics’ (Lewins 1992: 21). This produces six perspectives, each of which represents a highly stylised approach to cooperation. These six perspectives are intended as analytical, rather than normative, types. Moreover, it should not be expected that these perspectives will be found only in their pure form in the real world. There will inevitably be ‘slippage’ or ‘hybrids’ whereby specific scholars, policy makers and/or practitioners will adopt only part of one perspective or mix together more than one perspective. We also do not mean to imply that these perspectives will be uniform across different segments or levels of an organization; for example, workers and their supervisors might engage in productivity-related cooperation in the workplace while higher-level executives and trade union leaders might be less willing to act jointly over issues that they see as more strategic. These complexities, however, reinforce the need for a taxonomy of ideal types that can reveal the logically different assumptions underlying each perspective. To better understand this taxonomy, and the resulting perspectives on cooperation, it is important to explicitly identify the key characteristics that distinguish each perspective. We believe that five key assumptions are needed to distinguish these perspectives.

### ***3.1 Who is working together?***

Managers and workers must, of course, work together in all work organisations, so this could be seen as a common feature across all perspectives on cooperation. A more nuanced analysis, however, finds important differences across the perspectives on the nature of the parties involved in cooperation. A critical perspective highlights the class nature of the parties to the

employment relationships whereas a market-centric view sees the parties as atomistic agents who contract with each other when it is in their self-interest. Moreover, the perspectives differ on whether managers deal directly and solely with workers, or whether other parties are involved in the cooperative relationship, specifically organisations representing managers or workers. For some, cooperation is considered only to be possible between individuals, whereas in other views collective organisations are potential, or even desirable, participants. These views are often related to whether unions are seen as collective organisations of workers or as ‘third party’ outsiders.

### **3.2 *The compatibility of interests?***

This characteristic focuses on the aims of the parties and the extent to which their aims are compatible or mutually-achievable, thereby affecting the potential for cooperation. There are considerable differences (if not confusion) in the terminology used to describe these aims, ranging variously across interests, goals, concerns, objectives, needs, wants and motivations. Like Budd and Bhawe (2008), we adopt the term ‘interests’, which, following Jary and Jary (1991: 321), is defined as ‘...the particular social outcomes held to benefit a particular individual or group. Such interests may be those recognised and pursued by the person or group, or they may be identified by others, including social scientists, as underlying or ‘objective’ interests unrecognised by the person concerned.’

Consistent with this definition, we argue that the six perspectives bring different assumptions about the interests of the parties, especially in the extent of compatibility between the interests of the parties.<sup>2</sup> These differences are identified by social scientists and/or the parties themselves who adopt the respective perspectives. At one end of the spectrum are

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2. While our focus on interests in the employment relationship generally emphasises material interests of all workers and employers, we acknowledge that worker interests also can be viewed as rooted in gender, racial or other identities. These views may affect the dynamics of cooperation in the workplace, but this is left to future research.

critical views in which employers and employees need each other, but have interests that are sharply antagonistic rather than compatible, while at the other end of the spectrum laissez-faire views assume that employers and employees will form and continue a relationship only when their interests are compatible. In between are varying views on the nature of overlapping and conflicting interests among the parties to the employment relationship, with pluralist perspectives highlighting that there are always separate, frequently antagonistic interests and common interests as well, while unitarist perspectives emphasize common interests as being dominant.

### **3.3 *How much mutuality?***

Mutuality is the extent to which each party recognises the interests of others as legitimate and accepts responsibility for addressing others' interests. At either end of the conceptual spectrum are views in which employers and employees are largely or entirely responsible for their own interests, while in between are varying degrees of acceptance of the legitimacy of and mutual responsibility for employment relationship interests. The extent to which trade unions foster or hinder the achievement of mutuality is another element that separates the alternative views. At one extreme are views that criticise trade unions as unnecessary impediments to good management, the competitiveness of the enterprise or the economic prosperity of the nation (e.g. Fox 1969: 402-6). At the other are views that criticise trade unions for failing to advance the interests of their members by being too close to management (Oxenbridge and Brown 2004) or not close enough (Kochan and Osterman 1994). This variety of positions reveals different assumptions about how much responsibility parties to the employment relationship should take for the interests of other parties, and especially the role of trade unions in this dynamic. The alternative views, in turn, underlie different perspectives on cooperation.

### **3.4 *What kind of worker voice is required?***

The extent to which workers are entitled to voice and the form that this voice should take also distinguish alternative perspectives on cooperation. Some perspectives believe that workers should have the right and opportunity to participate in decision-making and rule-making based on principles of human dignity, autonomy, and industrial democracy (Budd 2004). Alternatively, others might believe that workers are not entitled to such rights while differing on whether there are instrumental benefits in involving workers in decision-making. Yet another perspective equates employee voice to the freedom to choose when to work and under what contractual conditions.

### **3.5 *Cooperation over what issues?***

Perspectives on cooperation differ on the range of issues that should be included in cooperative efforts. If the employment relationship is seen through a lens of irreconcilable conflict, then it is assumed that no issues are subject to cooperation. Another possibility is that only a narrow range of issues should be subject to cooperation. This could imply that cooperation would be seen as appropriate only at certain levels of the enterprise—for example, within a functional level where productivity is determined but not at a strategic level where larger decisions are made. Others believe that cooperation should involve a broad range of issues, or that cooperation should involve whatever particular parties find to be in their mutual self-interest. This might point toward cooperation occurring at multiple levels of an organization.

## **4. SIX PERSPECTIVES ON COOPERATION IN THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP**

Having explained the criteria used to distinguish the six perspectives on cooperation, we can now describe each of them in turn. Recall that each perspective is summarised in Table 1; the main assumptions that provide the foundation for the six perspectives are summarised in Table

2. We begin by examining the perspectives at either end of the continuum—a market-based or egoist perspective, and the radical or critical perspective.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The egoist (or market) perspective is ‘rooted in the pursuit of individual self-interest by rational agents in economic markets’ (Budd and Bhave 2008: 102). The parties are highly individualised. It matters little whether there is any initial incompatibility of interests because only workers who have accepted the organisation’s goals will enter into the employment relationship. In this way, cooperation within the employment relationship is unproblematic because employees have voluntarily embraced a common interest with employers as a result of negotiations and agreement between the parties: employers provide the specified rewards to employees, while employees agree to work under the direction of the employer. Conflict is not viewed as a structural feature of the employment relationship, but is instead seen as arising from opportunism when either side breaches, or is accused of breaching, the terms of the implicit or explicit employment contract. This emphasis on market transactions means that egoism has little to say about how cooperation within the enterprise is secured after the agreement is struck. Rather, cooperation is best seen as self-interested compliance.

The critical (or radical) perspective is ‘rooted in the power and control interests of employers and employees’ (Budd and Bhave 2008: 104), which are inevitably in conflict. The parties are conceived in class terms rather than individuals or representative organisations. The interests of employers and employees are inherently separate—indeed, irreconcilable—and neither side can be expected to take responsibility for the other. Some accommodation of each other occurs because employers and employees need each other, but this is better seen as part of a continual tension between accommodation and control where control rather than consent is superior. As such, cooperation in the (capitalist) employment relationship is seen as illegitimate because it is seen as enforced compliance. It is just another mechanism by which

managers control workers. It is the result of the exercise of uneven power (in the labour market and in the labour process) and it further reproduces power imbalances and the control of workers. Empirical studies in the critical tradition focus on the control strategies by which employers ‘manufacture consent’ (Burawoy 1979) and caution that the outcomes of cooperation between managers and employees have often failed to genuinely benefit workers (e.g. Kelly 2004; Bacon and Blyton 2006), and arguably cannot deliver genuine mutual gains (Dobbins and Dundon 2017).

The remaining four perspectives—two versions each of pluralism and unitarism—treat cooperation differently than the egoist and radical perspectives. By definition, pluralism demands recognition that the interests of employees and managers within the organisation are mixed: while some interests are common to each side, the importance of distinct interests are too important to overlook (Budd and Bhawe 2008). Pluralism further requires that this potential for conflict, which is inherent to the structure of employment and organisations under capitalism, is legitimate and accepted on both sides. These basic requirements, however, leave open a range of pluralist possibilities, from entrenched antagonism to warm cooperation. This continuum is revealed in practices like collective bargaining. Some bargaining relationships are highly adversarial, even though representatives of both sides recognise each other for bargaining purposes. Without challenging the legitimacy of their ‘opponents’ and expecting that agreement will eventually be reached, each side often keeps the other at ‘arm’s length’ in low-trust, rules-based relationships (Fox 1974). In contrast, other bargaining relationships are better characterised as ‘labour-management’ or ‘union-management’ partnerships, where both sides embrace cooperation, agreeing to share decision making on a wide range of issues, either through collective bargaining or other mechanisms of joint determination (Kochan et al. 2009; Avgar and Owens 2014). We believe that two separate pluralist perspectives on cooperation

are needed to constructively capture the diversity of views within pluralism: adversarial pluralism and collaborative pluralism.

In adversarial pluralism there is a recognition and acceptance that managers, employees and their representatives (usually unions) are legitimate parties to cooperation, but the emphasis is more on the distinctiveness of each party's goals than on the shared interests. While the parties acknowledge the legitimacy of the 'opponent's' interests, they see no responsibility to address or defend those interests beyond what is required to maintain the relationship. In this way, opportunistic 'wins' to the detriment of the opponent's interest will be seized as an acceptable, indeed desirable, outcome when circumstances permit it, but not to the extent of threatening the legitimacy or existence of the other side. The key distinction on issues is between matters that are subject to bargaining, and therefore jointly determined, and those which are left to management to decide unilaterally.

In collaborative pluralism there is also a recognition and acceptance that managers, employees and their representatives (usually unions) are legitimate parties to cooperation. But unlike in adversarial pluralism, collaborative pluralism emphasises common interests and mutual gains. This perspective assumes a preparedness of each side to take some responsibility for addressing the interests of the other side. Opportunistic 'wins' to the detriment of the opponent's interest undermine collaboration, exhibit a lack of regard for the other side's interests, and are therefore not seen as legitimate.

Unitarism, as defined by Budd and Bhawe (2008), rests largely on a denial of fundamental conflict between employers and employees because of the widespread embrace of the ability to create mutual gains, and an assumption that management represents the only needed source of authority within the organisation. As with pluralism, the foundational assumptions of unitarism leave open alternative perspectives that differ considerably on the extent and type of cooperation within the organisation (see also Cullinane and Dundon 2012).

We identify two separate perspectives that capture the key variants: autocratic unitarism and consultative unitarism.

In autocratic unitarism the employment relationship is the province solely of managers and employees, with no role for ‘third parties’. It assumes employee and employer interests to be inseparable and expects employee cooperation to flow naturally from the directions of managers. This autocratic vision allows managers to rely on property rights and superior knowledge and expertise to make unilateral decisions to advance organisational goals. Employees will comply with the directions of management—and employee compliance lies at the heart of this form of cooperation—because they are assumed to benefit when the organisation prospers. In this way, management is solely responsible for the achievement of organisational goals and the determination of most issues.

In consultative unitarism the employment relationship is again seen as the province solely of managers and employees, with no role for ‘third parties’. However this is a more consultative and inclusive form of unitarism—indeed, cooperative—because management actively seeks to align employee and management interests in a participatory, consultative way rather than in a hierarchical, unilateral fashion. It is therefore management’s responsibility to lead the organisation and to understand employee preferences on a wide range of issues through structures and processes such as employee attitude surveys, counselling of employees and performance management. Managers then develop organisational policies designed to meet and align employee expectations and aspirations.

## **5. RECOGNIZING PERSPECTIVES ON COOPERATION IN PRACTICE**

The key assumptions outlined in Table 2 allow us to describe six internally consistent but different perspectives on cooperation at work. In practice, however, we cannot ‘see’ assumptions. Rather, what’s observable in practice is the manifestation of these assumptions which can take many forms. We believe it is instructive to consider five key areas: the form of



the processes and structures through which cooperation occurs; the types and range of issues on which the parties cooperate; the extent of information sharing; the level of trust within the employment relationship; and the presence of dispute resolution procedures (see Table 3). As a reminder, in order to reveal key elements and contrasts, we are presenting ideal types. What happens in practice might be more complicated. For example, some research theorizes why there can be different labour-management interactions on different issues at different levels of an enterprise or economic system (Clegg 1976; Kochan, Katz and McKersie 1986; Edwards, Belanger and Wright 2006). Our ideal types are not meant to preclude these possibilities, and this literature could be useful to guide subsequent theorizing and empirical analysis with respect to cooperation in practice. Additionally, some industrial relations systems embody a hybrid approach, such as the United Kingdom's use of joint consultative committees or Germany's system of collective bargaining as distinct from works councils (Crouch 1982). To better understand complicated, multi-level and multi-institutional approaches within enterprises and countries, we need a clearer understanding of the ideal types of approaches to cooperation that are associated with differing perspectives on cooperation.

#### INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

In some respects, the (idealized) critical and market-based patterns of cooperative arrangements look similar in practice. In both, there is a lack of formal structures for cooperation, little need for information sharing, a lack of trust, and an absence of formal dispute resolution procedures. The key differences between these two perspectives is in the perceived context—is it a situation in which the two sides are seen as being forced to deal with each other on highly unequal terms, or one in which autonomous, equal agents voluntarily choose to contract with each when it serves their self-interest? Which perspective best describes each actual employment relationship is a very old debate that we cannot solve. But this reveals why some debates over cooperation specifically, and the employment relationship more broadly,

can be so intense—that is, similar observable features can be interpreted quite differently based on the assumptions that comprise one’s frame of reference.

In both adversarial and collaborative pluralism, one would find formal structures for representing workers’ and organizational interests, with the proto-typical example being collective bargaining. However, the assumptions that underlie these two perspectives lead to collective bargaining relationships that are expected to be significantly different. Adversarial pluralism is most likely to involve distributive bargaining over limited issues. Information is likely only shared in a strategic fashion to serve one’s own interests and trust does not run very deep. Agreements are likely committed to writing, which may be legally binding in some countries, and dispute resolution is a formal process to see whether this written agreement has been violated. Adversarial pluralism is probably the most commonly practiced form of pluralism, especially in ‘liberal market’ economies like the USA, Britain and Australia, although the collapse of union membership and the decline of collective bargaining is reducing its prevalence overall (Doellgast and Benassi 2014).

In contrast, collaborative pluralism is likely to involve a mixture of traditional bargaining to handle distributive issues and integrative bargaining, problem solving, and/or co-determination to address matters of common interest. When successful and sustained, this involves extensive information sharing and high levels of trust. Using the distinction developed by Edwards, Bélanger, and Wright (2006) between ‘control’ and ‘developmental’ concerns, adversarial pluralism is likely focused on control issues—such as the wage-effort bargain, working conditions, and the limits of managerial power—whereas collaborative pluralism also addresses developmental issues like efficiency improvements, skill development, process improvement, and organizational innovation. It is only when control and development issues are both jointly addressed that true cooperation may exist. Collaborative pluralism is less frequently implemented or sustained than adversarial pluralism, but it is much studied;

examples include various types of partnerships between unions and employers in the USA (Kochan et al. 2008, 2009), Britain (Johnstone, Akers, and Wilkinson 2009), and Australia (Townsend et al. 2013, Bray, Macneil, and Stewart 2017).

In consultative unitarism, one would expect to see formal participatory structures such as joint consultation committees, interest-based problem-solving groups, or other forms of worker involvement in decision-making or consultation, although managers retain the final decision-making authority. Similar structures for dispute resolution that involve workers but leave the ultimate authority to managers are also markers for consultative unitarism. Some commentators argue that cooperation is best advanced through one-on-one conversations between individual employees and their supervisors (Francis et al. 2013), though this would not be a highly-developed structure for cooperation. In consultative unitarism, control and especially developmental issues are subject to discussion, and extensive information sharing should be present. True cooperation requires the absence of opportunistic wins by one side or the other, so trust should be high in a consultative unitarist workplace. The mining giant, Rio Tinto, could be interpreted as approaching human resource management in this way, in that the careful design of performance management systems allowed one-on-one interactions between supervisors and their reports to build trust and align employees with the vision and goals of the organisation (AMMA 2007: 26), although this interpretation is contested by critics (Mackinnon 2012).

Lastly, when a workplace or organization is characterised by autocratic unitarism, the unilateral decisions of management on human resource management policies are prioritised. As such, there is an absence of formal structures for employee consultation, and greater attention to control than developmental issues. Information sharing is likely to flow in one direction from managers to workers, and is better seen as communication than as a bilateral exchange of information. Trust is not a central concern and any dispute resolution procedures

are likely to be manager-centric and informal, such as an open door policy. Examples of autocratic unitarism abound, including companies like Foxconn in China (Chan, Pun, and Selden 2013).

## **6. THE CHALLENGE OF ACHIEVING AND SUSTAINING COOPERATION**

The discussion of the six perspectives and associated patterns of practices in the previous two sections is valuable because it makes different perspectives on cooperation explicit, and carefully roots these differences in five key assumptions. In this way, we can better appreciate why there are different schools of thought on cooperation with such distinctive views in scholarly exchanges, policy debates, and practice within organizations. In turn, this provides two important ways for developing a better understanding of why cooperation is so difficult to implement and sustain in practice, especially in countries where national institutional arrangements provide little support. The first way is fairly static—that is, different participants in the employment relationship can have very different views on cooperation (recall Table 1) due to fundamental differences in assumptions (recall Table 2) resulting in different practices (recall Table 3). So cooperation is a contested idea, and cooperation is hard to implement when the parties lack a shared vision and common understandings. We return to this point later.

Moving beyond this static approach provides a second way to understand the challenge of implementing and sustaining cooperation. A dynamic consideration of the tensions across different forms of cooperation helps reveal how there can be a natural tendency to move away from cooperative employment relationships, even when there are strong institutional supports or the parties to the employment relationship devote considerable effort and appropriate resources to maintaining cooperation. We capture this more dynamic and nuanced account by locating the six perspectives on what we call a ‘cooperation curve.’

### 6.1 *The cooperation curve*

The cooperative curve is depicted in Figure 1. The vertical axis in the diagram is the degree of cooperation in a given employment relations regime: the higher the position on the axis, the more cooperation. The horizontal axis indicates the degree of integration or separation of interests. The centre of the horizontal axis represents an integration of employer and employee interests aimed at mutual gains. The further from the centre in either direction, the less integration and greater separation of the pursuit of employer and employee interests. The curve itself is designed to represent a continuum, along which the six discrete perspectives on cooperation represent important points, but the boundaries between these points are sometimes porous and we recognize that ‘hybrid’ positions might lie between the points.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

It bears repetition that this continuum focuses on cooperation rather than alternative concepts. This contrasts with some earlier accounts in which conflict and cooperation have been presented as opposite ends of the same continuum. Crouch (1982: 114), for example, offers a continuum with ‘concertation’ (i.e. cooperation) at one end and ‘contestation’ (i.e. conflict) at the other. The focus of this continuum is the different ways in which conflict is institutionalised. We take a different approach. We have defined cooperation as working together toward the same ends, so lower levels of cooperation mean less working together and less focus on the same ends. Conflict, by contrast, is a scale of opposition, ranging from high opposition (high conflict) to high alignment (low conflict). Consultative unitarism represents a high level of cooperation and low level of conflict, while radicalism represents a low level of cooperation and high level of conflict. But this does not make conflict and cooperation ends of a single scale because it overlooks other combinations. For example, egoism has low conflict among consenting parties but also low cooperation because the parties are focused on their own aims. Collaborative pluralism and consultative unitarism both have robust levels of

cooperation, but collaborative pluralism uniquely allows for conflicting as well as common interests, and thus has a higher level of conflict than consultative unitarism. As such, we do not theorize cooperation as the opposite of conflict with the absence of one necessarily leading to the presence of the other. Rather, treating cooperation and conflict as different concepts allows a more nuanced approach to theorising and understanding cooperation, including situations where they are both present in some employment relationships. Future work can deepen the theorizing on the complex intersection between conflict and cooperation; our concern here is cooperation.

On the left-hand side of the curve, radicalism rejects cooperation between workers and management, whilst privileging workers' interests, possibly to the exclusion of employer interests. Adversarial pluralism entails the recognition of both worker and employer interests, but cooperation is limited because of an ongoing contest over the distribution of rewards, often undertaken through traditional collective bargaining. Significant cooperation is only evident in cooperative pluralism, in which pluralist mechanisms have the potential to deliver mutual gains for employees and employers.

On the right-hand side of the curve, egoism sees cooperation as unproblematic, because employees are assumed to have agreed to follow the directions of management when they negotiated and accepted their employment contracts. Under autocratic unitarism, cooperation is essentially employee compliance with the unilateral dictates of management, again suggesting levels of cooperation that are modest at best. It is only consultative unitarism that suggests any significant cooperation between workers and management, achieved through active efforts by managers to elicit worker concerns and secure cooperation by offering organisational policies and practices that meet worker expectations.

## 6.2 *Applying the cooperation curve*

One significant advantage of the curve is the insight it offers at the top, where cooperative pluralism and cooperative unitarism are located. The assumptions underpinning these two perspectives are different, although the boundary between them may be less easy to establish in practice. For example, in ‘non-union partnerships’ many of the roles of employee representatives, the issues discussed and the structures and processes of consultation can look similar to those in union partnerships (Johnstone, Akers, and Wilkinson 2010). Another example of porous borders in practice comes from Pyman et al. (2006) who found that many unionised workplaces with well-established collective bargaining arrangements also had individualised, non-union forms of voice and participation. Indeed, they argued that the effectiveness of voice mechanisms increased where practices associated with both pluralist and unitarism models were present. However, this empirical overlap only makes it more important to identify the values that underpin cooperation, if it is to be recognised, pursued or maintained.

Moving away from these two types of genuine cooperation to the left or the right—most likely from collaborative pluralism to adversarial pluralism and from consultative unitarism to autocratic unitarism—leads to a reduction in cooperation as concern for mutuality is replaced by self-interest. This is likely a pragmatic weakening of cooperation rooted in instrumental assessments of the best way to achieve one’s objectives. In contrast, in the two perspectives farthest from the centre—radicalism and egoism—the assumptions have little in common with the perspectives in the middle. Both are inconsistent with the principle of shared interests—the critical (radical) perspective being that mutuality is not possible; and the egoism perspective dominated by a strong belief in the capacity of market exchanges to overcome the need to actively pursue mutuality in the workplace. As such, these perspectives are better characterised as principled opposition to cooperation.

The greatest advantage of the ‘cooperation curve’ is that it encourages a more dynamic analysis, incorporating changes over time, consistent with the fact that cooperation and partnership are dynamic entities in practice (Dobbins and Dundon 2017). Why, for example, it is so difficult in liberal market economies like the USA, UK and Australia to move up the curve towards more cooperative employment relations regimes (whether they be pluralist or unitarist) at the top of the curve? Why in such countries is it also so difficult to stay at the top of the cooperation curve and avoid sliding down towards less cooperative relationships?

Our response to both questions—as indicated in Figure 1—can be understood through the metaphor of entropy. Entropy is ‘a process of degradation or running down’ (Merriam-Webster 2018). In our application, entropy involves a degradation or running down of cooperation as movement occurs downwards from the centre of the curve on either side. A range of factors contribute to entropy, making the achievement and continuation of cooperation (either pluralist or unitarist) within the employment relationships challenging.

One set of factors affecting entropy is found among the parties to the employment relationship themselves. For example, many studies have found that the attitudes and actions of key individuals (often called ‘champions’) are central to ascension up the curve towards cooperation (for example, Harrison, Roy and Haines 2011) and to the sustainability of cooperative relationships at the top of the curve. The effort required of these champions and the resources often required to support them are investments that an organisation needs to make in order to maintain or expand cooperation; as found in many empirical studies, these investments include collegial and rhetorical support for the champions by other leaders, extensive training in the language and behaviour of cooperation, and the establishment of new consultation and decision-making structures (Bray, Macneil and Stewart 2017; Kochan et al. 2009; Stuart and Martinez Lucio 2005). More commonly, in the absence of these actions supporting cooperation, narrow perceptions of self-interest (amongst employees, union leaders,



managers, executives and others) can push parties to prioritise their own needs at the expense of others and dismiss mutuality (e.g. Teague and Hann 2010), thereby impeding the creation of cooperation and promoting entropy. In either case, parties' attitudes toward cooperation and their related actions play an important role, which reinforces the need to better understand alternative perspectives on cooperation.

But it would be overly narrow to only look within the employment relationship to seek answers to the questions above. Another set of entropic factors can be found in the broad economic/political/social context within which cooperative regimes must operate. Drawing on the 'varieties of capitalism' literature, Bélanger and Edwards (2007: 720) emphasise that technology, product markets and institutional regulation 'in combination create more or less favourable conditions for certain workplace outcomes', including cooperation. There might also be important ideologies and norms that shape the overall conditions for cooperation, and our framework reveals the major alternatives and their underlying assumptions. So whether structural or normative, broad 'macro' contextual factors that largely inhibit cooperation in liberal market economies often become embedded, or reproduced, at a 'micro' level in the structures and standardised processes of the individual organisation. Bray, Macneil, and Stewart's (2017) account of the institutional 'tide' flowing towards adversarialism offers a similar analysis.

The impact of entropy can be seen in two examples from the literature. First, many studies of cooperative employment relations regimes have noted the adverse impact of key champions of cooperation leaving the organisation after a successful transition to a cooperative regime (for example, Rimmer et al. 1996; Bray, Macneil and Stewart 2017). The dominance of adversarialism in other organisations in the outside economy means that often their replacements do not just lack experience with the cooperative approach but also lack a supportive frame of reference, making cooperation difficult to reproduce and sustain. Second,

cooperative regimes (pluralist or unitarist) are voluntary in nature, making it easier to withdraw if the cooperative relationship meets ‘bumps in the road’. Streeck (1992) argues that leaving cooperation to the voluntary choices of the parties, especially managers, misunderstands the importance of state intervention, and institutions more broadly, in moulding choice and especially in sustaining cooperation in the longer term. This is also reflected in the conclusions of Kochan et al. (2009: 63) about the Kaiser Permanente experience in the USA:

The result is that partnerships are unlikely to proliferate without strong buttressing elements from the external environment. The perspicacity and perseverance of enlightened management and union leaders working towards partnerships in specific organizations will likely not suffice to make partnerships a widespread and sustainable phenomenon in U.S. industrial relations....Changes in law and public policy may prove necessary to shift us from a lower-performing equilibrium to the higher-performing one prefigured by KP’s partnership.

## **7. THE IMPORTANCE OF IDEAS FOR PRACTICE**

The value of the six perspectives and associated patterns of practice developed in this paper can be seen in two different ways depending on how they are being used. First, researchers, policy makers and practitioners can use two or more of them to better understand alternative ways to think about and approach workplace cooperation. It is this usage that has been emphasised in this paper to this point. To fully understand the range of possibilities for conceptualizing workplace cooperation, we assert that six frames of reference are necessary, but using smaller subsets can also instructively reveal some key insights in particular cases. For example, leaders in a unionised workplace might only need to consider the critical and pluralist variants to understand their range of options in a unionised workplace. This way of using frames of reference to understand alternative perspectives is the typical way in which frames of reference are used in contemporary employment relations scholarship (e.g. Budd and Bhava 2008; Heery 2016).

A second usage, however, needs to be emphasised; namely, seeing a frame of reference as a mental map that shapes an individual’s perception which in turn influences their actions

(Fox 1973, 1974; Cradden 2018).<sup>3</sup> So we need to appreciate that workers, managers, company executives, union leaders, or other participants in a particular employment relationship frequently use one of these patterns to structure their understanding and expectations about the nature of workplace cooperation, even if implicitly rather than explicitly. If practices and discourse relevant to workplace cooperation in a particular workplace do not clash with an individual's expectations, based on their frame of reference, then we would expect that individual to comply with those practices. We theorise that in order for any of the patterns of workplace cooperation to be accepted and become stable in that unit, the actors need to share (or at least not object to) a frame of reference that supports that approach to cooperation.

Seeing the perspectives developed in this paper as the range of options for an individual's frame of reference on workplace cooperation, therefore, provides additional layers to understanding why it is often difficult to sustain cooperation. For starters, cooperation is expected to be difficult to maintain if key actors have divergent frames of references that yield clashing visions of workplace cooperation. Moreover, consider a workplace that is characterised by cooperation but faces an unexpected event. If individual frames of reference are not sufficiently aligned, then individuals can judge the unexpected event in different ways, leading to alternative courses of action and mistrust (Weber and Mayer 2014).

Within the realm of workplace cooperation, there seem to be particular risks that management, worker, or labour union behaviour will be seen by others as opportunistic, thus setting off a clash that threatens the stability of a cooperative arrangement. These risks highlight the importance of recognizing the roles not only of particular workplace practices, but also of the mental models that underlie them. This recognition furthermore opens up the space to

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3. To give information and experiences meaning, the human brain constructs a knowledge structure or interpretative schema. Research in the management and organizations literature typically labels these knowledge structures as 'cognitive frames' rather than 'frames of reference', and demonstrates their importance for shaping managerial decisions (Cornelissen and Werner 2014; Walsh 1995).

consider the role of framing practices (Benford and Snow 2000; Kaplan 2008; Weber and Mayer 2014) that can be used to align actors' frames of reference in support of creating or restoring workplace cooperation. Consequently, there is a need to complement the traditional focus on material practices with an appreciation for ideational practices surrounding different workplace regimes.

Lastly, this is not meant to imply that frames of references are only relevant for practitioners. Policymakers also have frames of reference that shape their support or opposition to alternative policy approaches, and scholars have frames that influence their research and writing on cooperation. We are also not intending to imply that practitioners should (not) pursue cooperation, or that academics and policies should (not) support cooperation as a goal. Rather, we seek to uncover the central perspectives and to demonstrate why achieving or maintaining cooperation can be challenging.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

This paper has argued that underlying the failure of scholars, policy makers and practitioners alike to properly define the important and widely supported concept of cooperation in the employment relationship leads to confusion, resulting from competing and often contradictory meanings given to the concept.

In an effort to shed light on these issues, and insert greater clarity, a typology was created to capture similarities and differences between six different perspectives on cooperation. This reveals that genuine cooperation is confined to just two of these types: collaborative pluralism and consultative unitarism. Notably, in contrast to many writers who reject the value of cooperation in the absence of trade unions, our framework reveals legitimate space for genuine cooperation within a unitarist frame of reference, but not unconditionally. This is an important distinction that needs to be recognised in future work. Relatedly, genuine cooperation is not an embraced goal in four of the six categories: the critical perspective sees

cooperation as a mechanism to control workers; egoism sees cooperation as largely irrelevant because it assumes the voluntary negotiation of cooperation before workers enter the employment relationship; adversarial pluralism sees cooperation on common interests as very limited, overwhelmed by conflicting interests that need to be bargained in a largely arms-length style; and autocratic unitarism largely assumes the right of employers to direct employees and expect employee compliance. A recognition of each perspective on cooperation in a comprehensive framework is important not only for understanding the range of views, but also because the substance of each perspective is only fully understood when seen in comparison with contrasting perspectives.

A dynamic analysis of these six perspectives on cooperation was then offered in the form of the cooperation curve. Amongst the advantages of this diagrammatic representation is the way it demonstrates the challenges of transitioning to either of the two cooperative regimes (i.e. collaborative pluralism and consultative unitarism) and then sustaining cooperation. In both cases, 'entropy' is a constant danger, created by a combination of self-interest, local features, and broader economic-political-social environments within which enterprises operate. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the pressures towards entropy will vary according to different combinations of these same factors in different contexts.

These advances are important for employment relations scholarship, policy making and practice. With respect to the first of these, the six perspectives crafted here can be used to theorise alternative employment relations paradigms when cooperation rather than conflict is viewed as the central construct. Moreover, the approach developed here highlights the need to incorporate the role of ideas in analyses of the success or failure of cooperative efforts, and the dynamic cooperative curve can be useful in analysing the trajectory of cooperative initiatives (for a recent example, see Johnstone and Wilkinson 2018). Policy makers will also benefit from our analysis. Cooperation is advocated by politicians and policy agendas of all complexions,

but they bring very different meanings and very different assumptions about how increased cooperation will be achieved and what its consequences will be. Better recognising the values that underlie the respective positions on cooperation will encourage more rational debate and allow policy making based on evidence rather than obscure rhetoric and opinion. In practice, greater clarity over contrasting perspectives on cooperation can lead to greater understanding among workplace actors with differing views, and can set the stage for aligning visions rooted in frames of reference that are roadblocks to developing and sustaining genuine cooperation.

Finally, as trade unions lose power and influence in many countries, pluralist and critical writers are increasingly sceptical about the prospects for genuine cooperation and partnership because the managers of organizations are freer to implement their desired employment relations systems. It is in this environment that understanding ideas about cooperation are more important than ever because frames of reference are likely to be even more important in shaping the choices that organizations make. Putting all of this together, we believe we have identified an important path forward for better understanding the oft-mentioned goal of workplace cooperation.

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**Table 1:**  
**Cooperation in the Employment Relationship—Six Perspectives**

<b>Perspective</b>	<b>Cooperation means...</b>
Critical Perspective / Radicalism	...acquiescence by employees to employer-established goals and practices.
Adversarial Pluralism	...employers, employees, and their representatives pursuing their separate goals and compromising with each other in ways that respect the legitimacy of each party's interests.
Collaborative Pluralism	...employers, employees, and their representatives <b>working together</b> on mutual goals and compromising on conflicting goals in ways that respect the legitimacy of each party's interests.
Consultative Unitarism	...employers and employees <b>working together</b> on organisational goals, in ways that are established by management through consultation.
Autocratic Unitarism	... employees following managerial directives for serving organisational goals, that in turn also are assumed to benefit employees.
Market Perspective / Egoism	...employers and employees complying with freely-entered contractual obligations in self-interested ways.

**Table 2: Cooperation in the Employment Relationship—Key Beliefs, Assumptions, and Perceptions**

<b>Key assumptions</b>	<b>CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE/RADICALISM</b>	<b>ADVERSARIAL PLURALISM</b>	<b>COLLABORATIVE PLURALISM</b>	<b>CONSULTATIVE UNITARISM</b>	<b>AUTOCRATIC UNITARISM</b>	<b>MARKET PERSPECTIVE/EGOISM</b>
<b>PARTICIPANTS</b> The nature of the parties to the employment relationship	Capital and labour as conflicting classes.	Management with workers and their representatives.	Management with workers and their representatives.	Management and workers; i.e., without interference from external ‘third parties’.	Management and workers; i.e., without interference from external ‘third parties’.	Management and individual employees as rational economic agents. Individuals may receive expert advice, but no ongoing role.
<b>COMPATIBILITY</b> The degree to which the interests of the parties can be aligned	Sharply-antagonistic interests cannot be aligned. Consent should not be confused with alignment.	Management and workers (and their representatives) have separate interests, some in conflict.	Management and workers (and their representatives) have separate interests, some in conflict and some in common.	Management and workers share a single common interest in the attainment of organisational goals.	Management and workers share a single common interest in the attainment of organisational goals.	Any incompatibility of interests is resolved before the formation of the employment relationship through contracting.
<b>MUTUALITY</b> Responsibility taken for advancing the interests of other parties	The nature of class struggle means neither capital nor labour are responsible for each other’s interests. Parties take opportunistic wins.	Each party responsible for advancing its own interests, with minimal/no responsibility for the other’s interests unless the relationship is threatened. Parties take opportunistic wins.	Joint responsibility to advance common interests. Parties avoid opportunistic wins.	Management takes responsibility to advance organisational goals with assistance from workers, and avoids opportunistic wins.	Management has responsibility and unique expertise to advance organisational goals, which are in the interests of both management and workers.	Each party responsible for advancing its own interests and for complying with contractual obligations. Parties take opportunistic wins.
<b>VOICE</b> The opportunity and/or the right to make decisions about work	Labour has the right to make decisions about work, but class conflict means they are not given the opportunity.	Workers have the right to bargain over decisions and should have opportunities to do so.	Workers (and their representatives) have the right to share in decision making and should have broad opportunities to do so.	Workers have no right to make decisions about work, but there is value in giving them broad opportunities to voice opinions.	Workers have no right to make decisions about work, and there is little value in giving them opportunities to do so.	Employees have the right to make decisions about work before a contract is agreed; opportunities thereafter are determined by the contract.
<b>ISSUES</b> The range of issues which are subject to cooperation	None, since the parties are in irreconcilable conflict.	Limited, depending on what issues the parties are required to discuss or what they agree to be in their common interest.	Broad, since the more issues that are brought to the table, the greater the integrative potential to benefit of all parties.	Broad, since common interests can be found in the immediate and long-term performance of the organisation.	Limited, since issues are determined by management and not subject to negotiation.	Whatever the parties seek to include in their contracts.

**Table 3: Cooperation in the Employment Relationship—Expected Manifestations**

<b>Expected manifestations</b>	<b>CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE/RADICALISM</b>	<b>ADVERSARIAL PLURALISM</b>	<b>COLLABORATIVE PLURALISM</b>	<b>CONSULTATIVE UNITARISM</b>	<b>AUTOCRATIC UNITARISM</b>	<b>MARKET PERSPECTIVE/ EGOISM</b>
<b>Structures or processes for rule-making</b>	Rules made and enforced based on relative power. Workers have formal voice only when they have the power to enforce it.	Rules made and enforced bilaterally through formal structures representing labour and management, using distributive bargaining.	Rules made and enforced bilaterally through formal structures via distributive and integrative bargaining and/or co-determination.	Rules made and enforced unilaterally by management, after consultation.	Rules made and enforced unilaterally by management.	Rules made and enforced individually through individual contracting.
<b>Issues emphasised in rule-making process</b>	Capital and labour both focused on issues of day-to-day control.	Management and workers both focused primarily on day-to-day control.	Management and workers both focused on issues of day-to-day control and of future development.	Management and workers focused on management's goals in relation to issues of day-to-day control and of future development.	Management focused on issues of day-to-day control.	Employers and employees share goals by agreement, or the relationship dissolves.
<b>Information sharing</b>	None.	Strategic manipulation of information.	Extensive.	Extensive.	One-way communication.	Strategic manipulation of information.
<b>Trust</b>	None. Other side assumed to be guided by power.	Low. Emphasis on contractual commitments and enforcement.	High. Absence of opportunistic wins but some contractual commitments and enforcement.	High. Absence of opportunistic wins, and trust reinforced through consultation.	Not perceived as relevant. Absence of opportunistic wins but little express trust building.	None. Other side assumed to be guided by self-interest.
<b>Dispute resolution</b>	Absence of formal dispute resolution procedures.	Formal adjudication of contractual terms.	Issue dependent. Formal adjudication of contractual terms and integrative problem solving.	Integrative problem solving. Formal non-union dispute resolution procedures.	Processes dictated by management.	Reliance on market alternatives.

Figure 1: The Cooperation Curve

