A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON POWER AND CHANGE

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INTRODUCTION

Power has typically been seen as the ability to get others to do what you want them to, if necessary, against their will (Weber, 1978). In the context of change, the use of power – by management – seems both logical and inevitable given the high risk of failure attributed to employee resistance noted in the opening chapter. If employees do not want to change, then managers must use power – the ability to make them change despite their disinclination – against their resistance. Yet behind this apparently straightforward understanding of the role of power and this ‘no nonsense’ approach to organizational change, lies a series of important struggles, not just about different conceptualizations of power, but also about the interplay between critical and managerial thought; and between academic and practitioner discourses.

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to provide an overview of the different ways in which power has been understood and to relate these different understandings to the literature in organizational change and the practical recommendations it provides for managing change. The first section explores the historical development of two traditions in the study of power: the broader heritage of Marx and Weber and the early management work on power. The second section then elaborates two diverging views and their underlying assumptions: critical theory, which draws and builds on the Marxian/Weberian heritage; and the more recent work in management which, for the most part, has adopted a very different conceptualization. The third section provides an analysis of the traditional organizational change literature to see how it accommodates these divergent assumptions. The fourth section focuses on the insights provided by Foucault, which have radically changed our understanding

of power. The fifth section examines some of the more recent ideas in managing organizational change in the light of these insights.

EARLY STUDIES OF POWER

This section examines some of the key work that provided the foundations for the current work on power and politics in organizations. Broadly speaking, the impetus came from two, quite different directions. One tradition stems from the work of Marx and Weber. Obviously, with such a parentage, this body of work has focused on the existence of conflicting interests and has examined power as domination. As a result, it has addressed how power becomes embedded in organizational structures in a way that serves certain, but not all, interest groups. The second tradition developed more centrally within the field of management. Less interested in how power might be used to dominate and to serve specific interests, this body of work takes for granted the ways in which power is distributed in formal, hierarchical organizational structures and, instead, examines how groups acquire and wield power that has not been granted to them under official bureaucratic arrangements.

POWER AND INTERESTS

One approach to the way in which power is structured into organization design has derived from work on class structures (see Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980: 463-82 for a discussion of the key literature). In as much as conceptions of interests depict the arena of organizational life in terms of the leitmotif of 'class' and its social relations, they will be attuned to the general conditions of economic domination and subordination in organizations, as theorists of the left from Marx onwards have defined them (see, for instance, Carchedi (1987: 100 for an identification of these conditions).

Marx (1976) argued that class interests are structurally predetermined, irrespective of other bases of identity. They follow from relations of production: these define classes through their ownership and control of the means of production or through the absence of that ownership and control. While relations concerning production, property, ownership and control are inscribed as the key social relations of capitalist modernity (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980; Clegg et al., 1986), few scholars would be restricted to this deterministic view today. Indeed, not long after Marx's death especially by Max Weber, who was the first sociologist to render Marx's view more complex by considering relations *in* production as well as relations *of* production, questioned the dichotomous representation.

While Weber acknowledged that power was derived from owning and controlling the means of production he argued that it was not reducible exclusively to these dichotomous categories of ownership and non-ownership, as proposed by Marx. From Weber's perspective, power also derived from the knowledge of operations as much from as ownership. Organizations could be differentiated in terms of people's ability to control the methods of production, as these are embedded in diverse occupational identities and technical relations at work. It is from these relations that the subjective life-world of the organization grows. In this way, Weber emphasized the forms of identification and representation that organizational members actually made use of, rather than simply assume that their view of the world was merely a 'false' consciousness if it did not correspond to the Marxist theorists view of the world.

In the view of Marx and much subsequent theory, there is little room for discretion or opportunity for strategic agency other than through collective class-

based action. Economic conditions regulate the context in which labour is sold and capital raised and, at the outset, two classes are defined: those who possess capital and those who do not. The latter have creative, differentially trained and disciplined capacities but the fact that they are obliged to offer these on the labour market in order to be employed renders them, necessarily, as sellers, rather than buyers, of labour power and thus as members of the working class. From Weber's perspective all organizational members, in principle, have some creativity, discretion and agency to use power (although some more than others). Once their labour is sold to bureaucratic organizations (Clegg, 1990), employees have the opportunity to use their capacities creatively in 'certain social relationships or carry out forms of social action within the order governing the organization' (Weber, 1978: 217). So, by factoring in the differential possibilities for creativity, it becomes clear that organizational members have some control over their disposition to exercise power, both to challenge and reproduce the formal organization structure in which differential powers are vested, legitimated and reproduced. Thus organizational 'structures of dominancy' do not depend solely on economic power for their foundation and maintenance (Weber, 1978: 942).

In this way, labour power represents a capacity embodied in a person who retains discretion over the application of that capacity. From the employer's point of view, the employee represents a capacity to labour that must be realized. Standing in the way of realization is the embodiment of potential power in the capacities of the people hired, who may be more or less willing to work as subjects ruled by managerial discretion and control. Always, because of embodiment, the people hired as labour will retain an ultimate discretion over what they do and how they do it.

Consequently, a potential source of resistance resides in this irreducible embodiment of labour power.

The gap between the capacity to labour and its effective realization implies power and the organization of control. The depiction of this gap is the mainstay of some Marxian traditions of analysis, particularly of alienation (Schacht, 1971; Geyer and Schweitzer, 1981; Mézáros, 1970; Gamble and Walton, 1972). Management is forever seeking new strategies and tactics through which to deflect discretion. The most effective and economical are thought to be those that substitute self-discipline for the discipline of an external manager. Less effective but historically more prolific, however, have been the attempts of organizations to close the discretionary gap through the use of rule systems, the mainstay of Weberian analyses of organizations as bureaucracies. Such rule systems seek to regulate meaning to control relations in organizations through the structure of formal organization design. Thus, a hierarchy is prescribed within which legitimate power is circumscribed.

In summary, this founding research focused on the way in which power derived from owning and controlling the means of production, a power that was reinforced by organizational rules and structures. Weber's work provided more room for strategic maneuver than Marxian views: workers had options and possibilities to challenge the power that controlled them. Although, as we shall see, these options proved to be far from easy to exercise due to more sophisticated strategies on the part of dominant groups.

POWER AND HIERARCHY

As the section above demonstrates, power in organizations necessarily concerns the hierarchical structure of offices and their relation to each other. Particularly (but not

exclusively) the field of management has tended to label such power as 'legitimate' power. One consequence of the widespread, if implicit, acceptance of the hierarchical nature of power, has been that social scientists have rarely felt it necessary to explain why it is that power should be hierarchical. In other words, in this stream of research, the power embedded in the hierarchy has been viewed as 'normal' and 'inevitable' following from the formal design of the organization. As such, it has been largely excluded from many analyses, which have instead focused on 'illegitimate' power: power exercised outside formal hierarchical structures and the channels that they sanction.

One of the earliest management studies of such power was that of Thompson (1956), who researched two USAF Bomber wings. The work of the USAF personnel was characterized by highly developed technical requirements in the operational sphere, for both aircrew and ground crew. While the aircrew possessed greater formal authority than the ground crew, the latter were in a highly central position within the workflow of the USAF base, relevant to the more autonomous aircrew. The aircrew depended upon the ground crew for their survival and safety, which conferred a degree of power of the latter not derived from the formal design of the base relations. Thompson attributed the power of the ground crew to their technical competency vis-à-vis the flight security of the planes and the strategic position it accorded them because of the centrality of concerns for the aircrew's safety.

Other writers confirmed Thompson's (1956) view that it was the technical design of tasks and their interdependencies that best explain the operational distribution of power, rather than the formal prescriptions of the organization design. Dubin (1957: 62), for example, noted how some tasks are more essential to the functional

interdependence of a system than others, and the way in which some of these may be exclusive to a specific party. Mechanic (1962) built on this argument, extending it to all organizations, saying that such technical knowledge generally might be a base for organization power. In this way, researchers began to differentiate between formally prescribed power and 'actual' power, which was also regarded as illegitimate.

[Researchers] have seldom regarded actual power ... [but] have stressed the rational aspects of organization to the neglect of unauthorized or illegitimate power. (Thompson, 1956: 290)

Other researchers were to echo this distinction as they followed in Thompson's footsteps. Bennis et al (1958: 144) made a distinction between 'formal' and 'informal' organization. In the formal organization there resides 'authority', a potential to influence based on position while in the informal organization there exists power, 'the actual ability of influence based on a number of factors including, of course, organizational position'.

Also important was Crozier's (1964) study of maintenance workers in a French state-owned tobacco monopoly whose job was to fix machine breakdowns referred to them by production workers. The maintenance workers were marginal in the formal representation of the organization design compared to the production workers, who were at the technical core of the organization and central to the workflow centred bureaucracy that characterized the organization. In practice, however, the story was very different. The production workers were paid on a piece-rate system in a bureaucracy designed on scientific management principles. Most workers were effectively 'de-skilled': the bureaucracy was a highly formal, highly prescribed organization and there was little that was not planned and regulated, except for the propensity of the machines to breakdown, and thus

diminish the bonus that the production workers could earn. Hence, to maintain their earnings the production workers needed the machines to function, which made them extraordinarily dependent on the maintenance workers. Without their expertise, breakdowns could not be rectified or bonus rates protected. Consequently, the maintenance workers had a high degree of power over the other workers in the bureaucracy because they controlled the remaining source of uncertainty.

Management and the production workers were aware of this situation and had attempted to remedy the situation through preventative maintenance. But manuals disappeared and sabotage sometimes occurred. The maintenance workers were indefatigable in defence of their relative autonomy, privilege and power. Through a skilled capacity, the result of their technical knowledge, they could render the uncertain certain. The price of restoring normalcy was a degree of autonomy and relative power, enjoyed and defended by the maintenance workers, well in excess of that formally designed for them.

Crozier's (1964) study was a landmark. He had taken an under-explicated concept – power – and had attached it to the central concept of the emergent theory of the firm – uncertainty. A central feature of organizations as conceptualized in the 'behavioural theory of the firm' (Cyert and March, 1963) was that they attempted to behave as if they were systems. Yet, they did so in an uncertain environment. The ability to control that uncertainty thus represented a potential source of power.

After Crozier (1964) and Thompson (1967), the field developed rapidly. A theory emerged, called the 'strategic contingencies theory of intra-organizational power' (Hickson et al, 1971), which built on these ideas. At the core was the idea that power was related to uncertainty, or at least to its control. More formal survey methods

were used, instead of grounded research, in which departmental managers presented a series of hypothetical scenarios for evaluation. In this way, the functionally specific personnel who used esoteric technical knowledge to control uncertainty and thus increase their power relative to the formally designed hierarchy were identified.

The change in methodology helped produce a formal functionalist model. The organization was conceptualized as comprising four functional sub systems or sub-units. The sub-units were interdependent, but some were more or less dependent, and produced more or less uncertainty for others. What connected them in the model was the major task element of the organization, which was conceptualized as 'coping with uncertainty'. The theory ascribed the balance of power between the sub-units to imbalances in how these interdependent sub-units coped with this uncertainty. Thus the system of sub-units was opened up to environmental inputs, which a source of uncertainty. Sub-units were characterized as more or less specialized and differentiated by the functional division of labour, and were related by an essential need to reduce uncertainty and achieve organizational goals: 'to use differential power to function within the system rather than to destroy it' (Hickson et al, 1971: 217).

According to this model, power is defined in terms of 'strategic contingency'. Strategically contingent sub-units are the most powerful, because they are the least dependent on other sub-units and can cope with the greatest systemic uncertainty, given that the sub-unit is central to the organization system and not easily substitutable. The theory assumes that the sub-units are unitary and cohesive in nature whereas, in fact, they are more likely to be hierarchical, with a more or less

problematic culture of consent or dissent. To be unitary, some internal mechanisms of power must exist to allow such a representation to flourish, silence conflicting voices, and over-rule different conceptions of interests, attachments, strategies and meanings. The theory assumes that management definitions prevail but research suggests it is not always the case (Collinson, 1994). Nor can we assume that management itself will necessarily be a unitary or cohesive category. For it to speak with one voice usually means that other voices have been marginalized or silenced. In other words, the strategic contingencies theory provides very little about these aspects of power because it does not challenge existing patterns of legitimacy.

Similar to the strategic contingencies view of power, in terms of theoretical approach, is the resource dependency view (Pfeffer and Salancick, 1974; Salancick and Pfeffer, 1974; Pfeffer, 1992). It derives from the social psychological literature that Emerson (1962) developed and which was implicit in Mechanic's (1962) study of the power of lower level participants. Sources of power include information, uncertainty, expertise, credibility, position, access and contacts with higher echelon members and the control of money, rewards, sanctions, etc. (e.g., Crozier, 1964; French and Raven, 1968; Pettigrew, 1973; Benfari et al, 1986) Such lists of resources are infinite, however, since different phenomena become resources in different contexts. Without a total theory of contexts, which is impossible, one can never achieve closure on what the bases of power are. They might be anything, under the appropriate circumstances.

Possessing scarce resources is not enough in itself, however, to confer power. Actors have to be aware of their contextual pertinence and control and use them accordingly (Pettigrew, 1973). This process of mobilizing power is known as politics

(Pettigrew, 1973; Hickson et al., 1986), a term whose negative connotations have helped to reinforce the managerial view that power used outside formal authoritative arrangements was illegitimate and dysfunctional. It was the dichotomous nature of power and authority that created the theoretical space for the contingency and dependency approaches. The concept of power was thus reserved primarily for exercises of discretion by organization members, which were not sanctioned by their position in the formal structure. Such exercises are premised on an illegitimate or informal use of resources; while the legitimate system of authority, on the other hand, is taken for granted and rendered non problematic.

In summary, the comparison of this early work on power reveals two diverging streams of research. The former, developed and sustained by the work of Marx and Weber, adopted a critical look at the processes whereby power was legitimated in the form of organizational structures. For these researchers, power was domination, and actions taken to challenge it constituted resistance to domination (see Barbalet, 1988). The work that was more directly located in management tended to view power quite differently: existing organizational arrangements were not structures of domination but formal, legitimate, functional authority. Power was effectively resistance, but of an illegitimate, dysfunctional kind. In other words, in studying 'power', the early work speaks to different phenomena, and from quite different value positions. The Marxist/Weberian tradition equated power with the structures by which certain interests were dominated; while the management theorists defined power as those actions that fell outside the legitimated structures, and threatened organizational goals.

THE EMERGENCE OF CRITICAL AND MANAGERIAL TRADITIONS

Subsequent work in both these areas was designed to enhance and extend these foundational ideas. In so doing, it served to widen the gulf that had already grown between the two approaches, as researchers directed their work principally at their own constituencies, rather than at trying to bridge the gulf between them. In this section, we examine the different paths that these two approaches took: an interest in domination and how consent was manufactured; and an interest in the use of power to defeat conflict.

STRATEGIES OF DOMINATION: MANUFACTURING CONSENT

The various constituent parts of the critical literature began to probe the means of domination in more detail. The heritage left by Weber provided a theoretical basis for reflecting on resistance by subordinate groups. But, if resistance was to be expected, why did subordinate groups so often consent to their own subjugation? Equally puzzling was the prevalence of passivity, which was so much more marked than revolutionary fervour. Marx had predicted that individual acts of resistance to exploitation would meld into a revolutionary challenge to existing power structures by the proletariat, those who peopled the base of most large, complex organizations. Yet, such dreams of a proletarian class-consciousness had failed to materialize.

One writer who addressed this issue, through a somewhat circuitous route, was Steven Lukes (1974). He traced the developments in the study of power made in the political sciences. Early studies had typically focused exclusively on the decision-making process (e.g., Dahl, 1957, 1961; Polsby, 1963; Wolfinger, 1971).

Researchers analyzed key decisions that seemed likely to illustrate the power relations prevailing in a particular community. The object was to determine who

made these decisions. If the same groups were responsible for most decisions, as some researchers had suggested, elite rule characterized the community. The researchers found, in contrast, that different groups prevailed in decision-making. Such a community was termed pluralist, and it was hypothesized that America as a whole could be considered to be a pluralist society. People who did not participate in a specific arena could be considered to be happy with their lot and to gain their satisfaction from participation in other areas of life.

Some writers began to question the pluralist assumptions that decision-making processes were accessible, and that nonparticipation reflected satisfaction with the political system. The civil rights movement and the backlash to the Vietnam War prompted doubts about the 'permeability' of the US political system (Parry and Morriss, 1975). The pluralists were criticized for their failure to recognize that interests and grievances might remain inarticulate, unarticulated, and outside the decision-making arena especially when access to formal decision-making arenas was not equally available to all members. Consequently, researchers began to conclude that conflict might well exist even if it was not directly observable (e.g., Gaventa, 1980; Saunders, 1980). Studies started to examine how full-and-equal participation was constrained. For example, Schattschneider (1960) argued nonparticipation might be due to:

the suppression of options and alternatives that reflect the needs of the non participants. It is not necessarily true that people with the greatest needs participate in politics most actively – whoever decides what the game is about also decides who gets in the game (p.105).

Building on this insight, Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963, 1970) developed the concept of a second face of power – a process whereby issues could be excluded from decision making, confining the agenda to 'safe' questions. A variety of barriers

are available to the more powerful groups to prevent subordinates from fully participating in the decision-making process through the invocation of procedures and political routines. The use of these mechanisms has been termed nondecision-making, because it allows the more powerful actors to determine outcomes from behind the scenes. This work highlights the fact that power is not exercised solely in the taking of key decisions, and that visible decision makers are not necessarily the most powerful.

Lukes (1974) argued, however, that Bachrach and Baratz's model did not go far enough because it continued to assume that some form of conflict was necessary to stimulate the use of nondecision-making power. 'Their focus was very much upon "issues" about which "decisions" were made, albeit "non-decisions"' (Ranson et al., 1980: 8). Lukes maintained, however, that power could be used to prevent conflict by shaping peoples' perceptions, cognitions, and preferences to the extent that:

they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they view it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial. (Lukes, 1974: 24)

The study of power could not, according to Lukes, be confined to observable conflict, the outcomes of decisions, or even suppressed issues. It must also consider the question of political quiescence: why grievances do not exist; why demands are not made; and why conflict does not arise. Such inaction may also be the result of power: we can be 'duped, hoodwinked, coerced, cajoled or manipulated into political inactivity' (Saunders, 1980: 22). It was this use of power that helped to sustain the dominance of elite groups and reduced the ability of subordinate interests to employ the discretionary power they possessed.

[P]ower is most effective and insidious in its consequences when issues do not arise at all, when actors remain unaware of their

sectional claims, that is, power is most effective when it is unnecessary (Ranson et al., 1980: 8).

In this third dimension, Lukes focused attention on the societal and class mechanisms that perpetuated the status quo. They relate to Gramsci's concept of ideological hegemony (Clegg, 1989a) – where 'a structure of power relations is fully legitimized by an integrated system of cultural and normative assumptions' (Hyman and Brough, 1975: 199). According to this view, the ability to define reality is used by dominant classes to support and justify their material domination, thus preventing challenges to their position.

Another stream of research on this issue came from labour process theory (eg. Braverman, 1974; Burawoy, 1979; Edwards, 1979), who examined the day-to-day minutiae of power and resistance, built around the 'games' that characterize the rhythms of organizational life (Burawoy, 1979). Studies (e.g., Edwards, 1979) also examined the historical patterns that structure the overall context of power, from simple, direct control premised on surveillance; through technical control based on the dominance of the employee by the machine, and particularly the assembly line; to fully fledged bureaucratic control – Weber's rule by rules. This tradition focuses on the dialectics of power and resistance in relation to phenomena such as gender, technology, ethnicity, managerial work and other aspects of the structuration of work and its organizational context (Knights and Willmot, 1985, 1989; Knights and Morgan, 1991; Knights and Murray, 1992; Kerfoot and Knights, 1993).

The notion of 'organizational outflanking' (Mann, 1986: 7) provides another answer to the question of why the dominated so frequently consent to their subordination. Outflanking works against certain groups in two related ways: either because they do not know enough to resist; or they know rather too much

concerning the futility of such action. The first concerns the absence of knowledgeable resources on the part of the outflanked. Frequently those who are relatively powerless remain so because they are ignorant of the ways of power: ignorant, that is, of matters of strategy such as assessing the resources of the antagonist, of routine procedures, rules, agenda setting, access, informal conduits as well as formal protocols, the style and substance of power. It is not that they do not know the rules of the game so much as that they do not recognize the game itself. Here resistance remains an isolated occurrence, easily surmounted and overcome. The second concerns precisely what the organizationally outflanked may know only too well: that the costs of resistance outweigh the chances of success or the benefits of succeeding. The necessity of dull compulsion in order to earn one's living, the nature of busy work, arduous exertion and ceaseless activity as routinely deadening, compulsory and invariable – such techniques of power may easily discipline the blithest of theoretically free spirits.

STRATEGIES OF MANAGEMENT: DEFEATING CONFLICT

The management literature took a different approach – instead of concerning itself with the use of power to prevent conflict, it focused almost exclusively on the use of power to defeat conflict. Definitions explicitly linked power to situations of conflict that arise when actors try to preserve their vested interests (e.g., Pettigrew, 1973, 1985; MacMillan, 1978; Pfeffer, 1981a, 1992; Narayanan and Fahey, 1982; Gray and Ariss, 1985; Schwenk, 1989).

From the definition of power, it is clear that political activity is activity that is undertaken to overcome some resistance or opposition. Without opposition or contest within the organization, there is neither the need nor the expectation that one would observe political activity (Pfeffer, 1981a: 7).

Such definitions evoke the idea of a 'fair fight' where one group (usually senior management) is forced to use power to overcome the opposition of another (perhaps intransigent unions or dissident employees). It is a view reinforced by the definition of politics in terms of illegitimacy: a common definition of politics in the management literature is the unsanctioned or illegitimate use of power to achieve unsanctioned or illegitimate ends (e.g., Mintzberg, 1983, 1984; also see Mayes and Allen, 1977; Gandz and Murray, 1980; Enz, 1988). It clearly implies that this use of power is dysfunctional and aimed at thwarting initiatives intended to benefit the organization for the sake of self-interest. Distilled to its essence, politics refers to behaviour that is "informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all, in the technical sense, illegitimate – sanctioned neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise (though it may exploit any one of those)" (Mintzberg, 1983: 172). Thus power was equated with illegitimate, dysfunctional, self-interested behaviour, which raised an interesting question concerning what happens when there is no conflict: does power simply cease to exist or does it turn into something else? If so, what does it become? According to this work, only 'bad guys' use power – and discredited with the term "political" – the 'good guys' use something else, although the literature is not clear on exactly what.

Good guy/bad guy views are also problematic in so far as they ignore the question of: in whose eyes is power deemed illegitimate, unsanctioned, or dysfunctional? Legitimacy is usually defined in terms of the 'organization', when writers really mean organizational elites: that is, senior management. Thus managerial interests are equated with organizational needs and the possibility that managers, like any other group, might seek to serve their own vested interests is

largely ignored (Watson, 1982). But organizational structures and systems are not neutral or apolitical – they are structurally sedimented phenomena. There is a history of struggles already embedded in the organization. The organization is a collective life-world in which traces of the past are vested, recur, shift and take on new meanings. In Weber's terms organizations already incorporate a 'structure of dominancy' in their functioning: authority, structure, ideology, culture, and expertise are invariably saturated and imbued with power.

The management tradition has, however, taken the structures of power vested in formal organization design very much for granted. The focus is on the exercise of power within a given structure of dominancy (Perrow, 1970). Such an approach focuses only on surface politics and misrepresents the balance of power. It attributes far too much power to subordinate groups who are chastised for using it; while the hidden ways in which senior managers use power behind the scenes to further their position by shaping legitimacy, values, technology and information are conveniently excluded from analysis. This narrow definition (see Frost, 1987) also obscures the true workings of power and depoliticizes organizational life (Clegg, 1989a). It paints an ideologically conservative picture that implicitly advocates the status quo and hides the processes whereby organizational elites maintain their dominance (Alvesson, 1984) as mechanisms of domination such as leadership, culture and structure are treated as neutral, inevitable or objective and, hence, unproblematic (Clegg, 1989a; 1989b; also see Ranson et al, 1980; Deetz, 1985; Knights and Willmott, 1992; Willmott, 1993).

Some management researchers did start to question these assumptions as they became interested in power as legitimation (Astley and Sachdeva, 1984). Political

scientists had long recognized the advantages of creating legitimacy for existing institutions, thereby avoiding the necessity of using more coercive, visible forms of power (Lipset, 1959; Schaar, 1969; Roelofs, 1976; Rothschild, 1979). Legitimacy can also be created for individual actions, thus reducing the chances of opposition to them. Edelman (1964, 1971, 1977) pointed out that power is mobilized, not just to achieve physical outcomes, but also to give those outcomes meanings – to legitimize and justify them. Political actors use language, symbols, and ideologies to placate or arouse the public. In the manner described by Lukes' (1974) third dimension of power, the process of legitimation prevents opposition from arising.

Political analysis must then proceed on two levels simultaneously. It must examine how political actions get some groups the tangible things they want from government and at the same time it must explore what these same actions mean to the mass public and how it is placated or aroused by them. In Himmelstrand's terms, political actions are both instrumental and expressive (Edelman, 1964: 12).

One writer who attempted to draw legitimation processes into the management fold was Pettigrew (1977). His work on the management of meaning explicitly addressed how power was used to create legitimacy.

Politics concerns the creation of legitimacy for certain ideas, values and demands – not just action performed as a result of previously acquired legitimacy. The management of meaning refers to a process of symbol construction and value use designed both to create legitimacy for one's own demands and to 'de-legitimize' the demands of others. (Pettigrew, 1977, 85)

This work acknowledges that political actors do not always define success in terms of winning in the face of confrontation where, as others have pointed out, there must always be a risk of losing, but in terms of their ability to section off spheres of influence where their domination is perceived as legitimate and thus unchallenged (Ranson et al., 1980; Frost, 1988). In this way, power is mobilized to influence

behaviour indirectly by giving outcomes and decisions certain meanings; by legitimizing and justifying them.

Pfeffer (1981a; 1981b) considered a similar use of power when he distinguished sentiment (attitudinal) from substantive (behavioural) outcomes of power. The latter depend largely on resource dependency considerations, while the former refer to the way people that feel about the outcomes and are mainly influenced by the symbolic aspects of power, such as the use of political language, symbols and rituals. Pfeffer (1981a) argued there is only a weak relationship between symbolic power and substantive outcomes: that symbolic power is only used post-hoc to legitimize outcomes already achieved by resource dependencies. In this way, Pfeffer stops short of acknowledging that power can be used to prevent conflict and opposition. There is, however, an inconsistency in Pfeffer's arguments: if symbolic power is effective enough to 'quiet' opposition ex post, why not use it ex ante to prevent opposition from arising in the first place? The only factor preventing Pfeffer from reaching this conclusion is his refusal to acknowledge the existence of power in situations other than those characterized by conflict and opposition (Pfeffer, 1981a: 7).

Despite the work of these writers and others (e.g., Clegg, 1975; Gaventa, 1980; Ranson et al, 1980; Hardy, 1985) the management 'school' remained distant from the more critical work on domination. The majority of management writers continued to focus on dependency and to define power in terms of conflict and illegitimacy (e.g., Mayes and Allen, 1977; MacMillan, 1978; Gandz and Murray, 1980; Narayanan and Fahey, 1982; Mintzberg, 1983, Gray and Aris, 1985; Pettigrew, 1985; Enz, 1988; Schwenk, 1989; Pfeffer, 1992). Pfeffer's (1981a) prevarication is, in fact,

indicative of the entire field. The idea of managers conceptualizing power in a more critical way threatens to open up a can of worms for a perspective grounded in managerialism. Rather than delve into the power hidden in and mobilized through apparently neutral structures, cultures and technologies, the vast majority of researchers preferred to continue to view these constructs as apolitical management tools.

POWER AND CHANGE: RELUCTANT INCREMENTALISM?

The previous two sections document the emergence of two approaches, with diverging trajectories, to the study of power – the critical and the managerial, which by the mid-1980s appear firmly established. In this section, we explore how these two conceptualizations of power relate to work on organizational change. As Bradshaw and Boonstra note in Chapter 4.1, the role of power in organizational change efforts was recognized in the early 1970s. What have been its assumptions regarding the nature of power and how have they changed?

We would argue that the change literature has been – and still is – firmly fixated on the idea that power is exercised only in the face of conflict. In fact, this assumption is embedded in the obsession of both practitioners and academics with resistance. In their chapter (table 1), Bennebroek Gravenhorst and 't Veld show how traditionally, resistance is seen as an inevitable and natural reaction to organizational change. Estimates suggest that around three-quarters of change programs fail because of some form of resistance, whether in the US, the UK or Europe (see the introductory chapter). The reasons are complex but many change theorists attribute the blame to the way in which employees experience a loss of self-control, autonomy, status and benefits (Morris and Raben, 1995) either because

of the change or because of the way the change is handled (Spiker and Lesser, 1995).

In this regard, organizational change theorists do subscribe to one assumption of the critical theorists, that is: power and resistance, although substantively different, are intertwined. Without the possibility of resistance there is no need for power. Or, to be more accurate, if there is resistance (on the part of the employees), there is justification for the use of power (on the part of managers). Despite this similarity, the conceptualization of resistance in the organizational change literature is not the one associated with the critical tradition: this is not resistance to domination, but resistance of a dysfunctional kind driven by employees' need for security. When critical theorists differentiate resistance and power to signify 'qualitatively different contributions to the outcome of power relations made by those who exercise power over others, on the one hand, and those subject to that power, on the other' (Barbalet, 1985: 545), they juxtapose resistance against domination and in so doing legitimate resistance. Organizational change theorists, on the other hand, juxtapose resistance against rationality – management's 'rational' approach to change is 'threatened' by resistance in the form of illegitimate behaviour that is directed against it – and in so doing legitimate the use of power by managers. The result, as we shall see, has been the grafting of power strategies on to the 'truth and love' of the original T-groups and the common sense of the rational manager.

For example, the humanist, rational traditional has pushed effective communication to the forefront of change strategies: most change models refer to the importance of communicating change as a means of avoiding resistance, with various suggestions for developing an effective communications strategy (Klein,

1996). The potential for communication glitches are considerable. Ford and Ford (1995) identify a number of communication breakdowns e.g., conversations may take place with the wrong people i.e., individuals who are not in a position to take action relating to change; there may be a lack of clarity in communicating what the change is, where it is headed, and what expectations are associated with it; even when there is agreement about the need for change, there may be a lack of understanding about what needs to be done and who has responsibility for specific actions; and expectations or deadlines are not always adequately communicated leading to problems with implementing change. However, by engaging in the right kind of conversations, managers can overcome these problems.

Other writers have highlighted the need for the right kind of talk (Marshak, 1993). Use the imagery of building, growing or nurturing for incremental, developmental change; phrases such as 'leaving the old behind', 'taking the best route' and 'avoiding obstacles and dead ends' will help implement transitional change, which entails moving from the existing situation to an improved one; transformational change needs terms like 'recreating ourselves', re-inventing', and 'waking-up'. Use the wrong words to communicate a particular type of change, and you will run into problems as you send a mixed message and add confusion to the change process. Other writers relate the type of talk to the underlying value structure of the organization (e.g., Kabanoff et al., 1995). Elite organizations need to communicate change in a top-down manner; meritocratic organizations emphasize the constructive role of employees in change; collegial organizations are more apt to convey positive images of change including employee involvement and benefits.

This research indicates that communication strategies that fail to appreciate the change context will run into problems (Palmer and Hardy, 2000).

In other words, communicate the change properly and employees will see the light: change is beneficial and, once everyone understands that, change programs can progress uninterrupted. In this way, humanist and rational views are both based on a unitary view of organizations where common goals bind employees and managers to the organization (Fox, 1973). In the unhappy event that employees remain unconvinced of the benefits of change, which must surely attach to managerial prerogative, managers can resort to the pluralist model of organizations and use 'power and conflict to force movement through the process by overcoming resistance and encouraging the driving forces of change' (French and Delahaye, 1996: 22). However, in both informing employees and exerting pressure on them (Bennebroek Gravenhorst and in 't Veld: table 1), organizational change managers sit astride a rather uneasy and conflicting set of assumptions: the pluralist perspective of management and employees as opposing parties jostles against the unitarist view of management and employees as united by common goals (Fox, 1973). Similarly, the change strategies advocated by Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) in table 2 of the chapter by Bennebroek Gravenhorst and in 't Veld, range from education, participation, and facilitation – all associated with a unitary view of management – to negotiation, manipulation, coercion, which are associated with a pluralist framework. Nor have things changed much: the chapter by Yukl suggests a combination of rational persuasion, consultation, collaboration, and apprising on the unitary side vs. coalitions, ingratiation, pressure, and exchange, on the side of pluralism. The uneasy jostling still exists.

What is new to Yukl's list, perhaps, is the use of inspirational appeals for change. This strategy is undoubtedly influenced by the work on charismatic power and transformational leadership that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, which assumes (usually implicitly) that power is used responsibly to achieve organizational objectives, even though much of what we know about charismatic power comes from studying such leaders as Hitler and Mussolini (Hardy and Clegg, 1996). We would also argue that this type of strategy represents a management of meaning: change is linked to a person's values through 'ideological appeals' wherein 'no tangible rewards are promised, only the prospect that the target person will feel good as a result' through invocation and use of vivid imagery, metaphors, symbols (Yukl, Chapter 4.2) in a manner reminiscent of Lukes' third dimensional use of power.

In this way, communication strategies make the transition from revealing the truth to managing meaning. Now, it would seem, organizational change theorists have the complete portfolio of strategies – having bolted the pluralist on to the unitary model, they can manage those situations when humanism and rationality fail to do the job. The radical model has been appropriated (although not necessarily knowingly) for managerial use in circumventing the inconvenience of resistance. The reluctance in the change literature to deal with power in the context of change has been overcome through the way in which it has been incrementally incorporated into strategies for change.

THE END OF SOVEREIGNTY

Neither the critical nor the managerial conceptualization of power described above remained fixed. In fact, important changes were about to occur as the work of postmodern thinking started to infiltrate organization and management theory. In

particular, the arrival of Foucault on the power scene posed a fundamental challenge by sounding the death-knell of sovereignty. The idea that power could be exercised strategically and successfully against intended targets was deeply embedded in the views of critical and management theorists alike. In disposing of sovereignty, Foucault's work transformed the study of power through the way it introduced the idea of disciplinary power, de-centred the subject, and laid the foundations for new notions of resistance (see, for example, Deetz, 1992a; 1992; Alvesson and Deetz, 1996; Hardy, and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998; Mumby, 2001).

POWER AND DISCIPLINE

Foucault's (1977) understanding of 'disciplinary practices' led to an interest in the 'micro-techniques' of power. Unlike Weber's rule systems, these techniques are not ordinarily thought of in terms of the causal concept of power (the notion of someone getting someone else to do something that they would not otherwise do). Instead, they represent ways in which both individual and collectively organized bodies become socially inscribed and normalized through routine aspects of organizations – much closer to Weber's emphasis on the importance of discipline in phenomena such as Taylorism than his more theoretical accounts of power as a social action. Through discipline power is embedded in the fibre and fabric of everyday life. At the core of Foucault's work were practices of 'surveillance', which may be more or less mediated by instrumentation. Historically, the tendency is for a greater instrumentation to develop as surveillance moves from a literal supervisory gaze to more complex forms of observation, reckoning and comparison. Surveillance, whether personal, technical, bureaucratic or legal, ranges through forms of supervision, routinization, formalization, mechanization, legislation and design that

seek to effect increasing control of employee behaviour, dispositions and embodiment. Surveillance is not only accomplished through direct control. It may happen as a result of cultural practices of moral endorsement, enablement and persuasion, or as a result of more formalized technical knowledge, such as the computer monitoring of keyboard output or low cost drug-testing systems.

The effectiveness of disciplinary power in the nineteenth century was linked to the emergence of new techniques of discipline appropriate for more impersonal, large scale settings in which the *gemeinschaft* conditions whereby each person knew their place no longer prevailed (see Bauman, 1982; Foucault, 1977). Previous localized, moral regulation, premised on the transparency of the person to the gaze of the community, was no longer viable. So, new forms of state institution emerged in which new forms of control were adopted, and later copied by the factory masters. However, as Foucault was at pains to point out, no grand plan caused these institutions to adopt similar forms of disciplinary technique. Rather, people copied what was already available, creating their own world in isomorphic likeness of key features they already knew. Disciplinary techniques had been readily available in the monastic milieu of religious vocation, the military, institutional forms of schooling, poor houses, etc and their effectiveness had been established during the past two centuries. These relations of meaning and membership were reproduced and dispersed as the basis for social integration in other organizations in a manner not unlike that described as institutional innovation (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

At a more general level, the 'disciplinary gaze' of surveillance shaped the development of disciplines of knowledge nineteenth century in such areas as

branches of social welfare, statistics and administration (Foucault, 1977).

Organizationally, the twentieth century development of the personnel function under the 'human relations' guidance of Mayo (1975) may be seen to have had a similar tutelary role (see Clegg, 1979; Ray, 1986). Such mechanisms are often local, diverse and uncoordinated. They form no grand strategy. Yet, abstract properties of people, goods and services can be produced that are measurable, gradeable, and assessable in an overall anonymous strategy of discipline. In this way, Foucault challenged sovereign notions of power: power was no longer a deterministic resource, able to be conveniently manipulated by legitimate managers against recalcitrant, illegitimate resistance by lower orders. Instead, all actors operated within an existing structure of dominancy – a prevailing web of power relations – from which the prospects of escape were limited for dominant and subordinate groups alike.

POWER AND IDENTITY

The work of Foucault and other postmodern theorists has also been important in challenging previous conceptions of identities, showing:

the contemporary vanity of humankind in placing the 'individual', a relatively recent and culturally specific category, at the centre of the social, psychological, economic, and moral universe. The subject, decentred, relative, is acknowledged not as a stable constellation of essential characteristics, but as a socially constituted, socially recognized, category of analysis. For example, no necessarily essential attributes characterize 'men' or 'women'. Instead the subjectivity of those labelled as such is culturally and historically variable and specific (Clegg and Hardy, 1996: 3).

Not surprisingly, Foucauldian insights have played an important role in the work on gender. While early contributions (e.g., Kanter, 1975; 1977; Wolff, 1977; Gutek and Cohen (1982) had already noted the way in which women were systematically

subjected to power inside organizations in ways that were inseparable from their broader social role.

By the 1970s, scholars were increasingly aware of not only the gender blindness of organizations but also of organization studies itself (see Mills and Tancred (1992) for a brief overview). Major texts were reassessed in terms of how their contribution to the literature was often premised on unspoken assumptions about gender or unobserved and unremarked sampling decisions or anomalies, in gender terms (Brown, 1979; Acker and Van Houton, 1974). For example, Crozier's (1964) maintenance workers were all men while the production workers were all women. As Hearn and Parkin (1983) were to demonstrate, this blindness was symptomatic of the field as a whole, not any specific paradigm within it.

A peculiar irony attaches to this, as Pringle (1989) was to develop. Gender and sexuality are extremely pervasive aspects of organizational life. In major occupational areas, such as secretaries and receptionists for example, organizational identity is defined through gender and the projection of forms of emotionality, and indeed, sexuality, implicated in it. The mediation of, and resistance to, the routine rule enactments of organizations are inextricably tied in with gender since behaviour is defined not only as organizationally appropriate or inappropriate, but its appropriateness is characterized in gendered terms. Neatness, smartness, demureness take on gendered dimensions (Mills, 1988; 1989; Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991). Rather than challenging these taken-for-granted assumptions, the gender bias inherent in the study of organization has helped to preserve the status quo. How else could the vantage point and privileges of white, usually Anglo Saxon,

normally American, males have been taken for granted for so long (Calás and Smircich, 1992)?

Functionality attaches to dominant ideologies: presumably that is why they dominate (Abercrombie et al., 1980). Repression is not necessarily an objective or a prerequisite, but often simply a by-product of an ideology that maximizes the organization's ability to act. Masculinist ideology has long been dominant in the majority of organizations. Certain male identities constituted in socially and economically privileged contexts routinely will be more strategically contingent for organizational decision-making, and for access to and success in hierarchically arranged careers (Heath, 1981). But, organizations do not produce actions that are masculinist, so much as masculinism produces organizations that take masculinist action. Often they do this without anyone even being explicitly aware of it. In such a case the decisions that characterize organizational action will be a result, not a cause, of ideology. Organizations may be the arenas in which gender politics play out, and, as such, suitable places for treatment through anti-discriminatory policies. But, such 'solutions' may address only the symptoms and not the causes of deep-seated gender politics. Attacking their organizational expression may suppress these symptoms but it is unlikely to cure the body politic, behind which there is a history of living and being in a gendered world that is tacit, taken-for-granted and constitutive of the very sense of that everyday life-world.

People's identities are not tied up only in their gender or sexuality, any more than in the type of labour power that they sell to an organization. People in organizations are signifiers of meaning. As such they are subject to regimes of specific organizational signification and discipline, usually simultaneously. Identities

premised on the salience of extra-organizational issues such as ethnicity, gender, class, age, and other phenomena, provide a means of resistance to these organizational significations and discipline, by providing resources with which to limit the discretion of organizational action. Who may do what, how, where, when and in which ways are customarily and, sometimes, legally specific identities, which are prescribed or proscribed for certain forms of practice. Embodied identities will only be salient in as much as they are socially recognized and organizationally consequent. Consequently, forms of embodiment such as age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religiosity and handicap are particularly recognizable as bases that serve to locate practices for stratifying organization members, as evidenced by their being the precise target of various anti-discrimination laws.

Accordingly organizations are structures of patriarchal domination, ethnic domination, age, domination, and so on. Such matters are clearly contingent: most organizations may be structures of class, gender, or ethnic dominancy but not all necessarily will be. Too much hinges on other aspects of organization identity left unconsidered. In specific organizational contexts, for example, the general conditions of economic or class domination may not necessarily be the focus of resistance or struggle. More specific loci of domination may be organizationally salient; after all, divisions of labour are embodied, gendered, departmentalized, hierarchized, spatially separated and so on. As a result, organizations are locales in which negotiation, contestation and struggle between organizationally divided and linked agencies is a routine occurrence.

Divisions of labour are both the object and outcome of struggle. All divisions of labour within any employing organization are necessarily constituted within the

context of various contracts and conditions of employment. Hence the employment relationship of economic domination and subordination is the underlying sediment over which other organization practices are stratified and overlaid, often in quite complex ways. This complexity of organizational locales renders them subject to multivalent powers rather than monadic sites of total control: contested terrains rather than total institutions. It is these struggles of power and resistance that those approaches influenced by Foucault seem best able to appreciate, because they are not predisposed to know in advance who the victorious and vanquished dramatis personae should be. Rather, the emphasis is on the play of meaning, signification and action through which all organization actors seek to script, direct and position all others.

POWER AND RESISTANCE REVISITED

Resistance may be defined as the 'efficacious influence of those subordinate to power' (Barbalet 1985: 542). Given that any member of a complex organization is only one relay in a complex flow of authority up, down and across organization hierarchies, resistance will always be incipient. Ideally, according to management, connections among these relays should not confront resistance; there should be no 'problem' of obedience. Rarely, if ever, is this the case, as organization researchers have long known because of the complexity and contingency of human agency. Instead, resistance is pervasive as organizational actors use their discretion. It is the ability to exercise discretion – to have chosen this rather than that course of action – which characterizes power, both on the part of power holders, those who are its subjects, and on the part of those who are its objects.

Important implications flow from the relationship between power, resistance and discretion. Power will always be inscribed within contextual 'rules of the game', which both enable and constrain action (Clegg, 1975). Such rules can never be free of surplus or ambiguous meaning: they can never provide for their own interpretation. Issues of interpretation are always implicated in the processes whereby agencies make reference to and signify rules (Wittgenstein, 1968; Garfinkel, 1967; Clegg, 1975; Barnes, 1986). 'Ruling' is thus an activity: it is accomplished by some agency as a constitutive sense-making process whereby attempts are made to fix meaning. Both rules and games necessarily tend to be the subject of contested interpretation and, although some players may have the advantage of also being the referee, there is always discretion, and therein lies the possibility of resistance.

Thus there is the central paradox of power: the power of an agency is increased in principle by that agency delegating authority; the delegation of authority can only proceed by rules; rules necessarily entail discretion, and discretion potentially empowers delegates. From this arises the tacit and taken-for-granted basis of organizationally negotiated order, and on occasion, its fragility and instability, as has been so well observed by Strauss (1978). Matters must be rendered routine and predictable if negotiation is to remain an unusual and out of the ordinary state of affairs. Thus freedom of discretion requires disciplining if it is to be a reliable relay. In this way, power is implicated in authority and constituted by rules; rules embody discretion and provide opportunities for resistance; and, so, their interpretation must be disciplined, if new powers are not to be produced and existing powers transformed.

Given the inherent indexicality of rule use, things will never be wholly stable even though they may appear so historically (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Resistance to discipline is thus irremediable because of the power/rule constitution as a nexus of meaning and interpretation, which is always open to being re-fixed. So, although the term 'organization' implies stabilization of control – of corporate and differential membership categories across space and across time – this control is never total. Indeed, it is often the contradictions in the evolution of regimes of control that explain their development (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980). Resistance and power thus comprise a system of power relations in which the possibilities of, and tensions between, both domination and liberation inevitably exist (Sawicki, 1991: 98). Politics is a struggle both to achieve and escape from power (Wrong, 1979; Hindess, 1982; Barbalet, 1985; Clegg, 1994). Such a view involves a reconceptualization from the duality of power (domination) or resistance (liberation) that had existed in sociological literature (e.g., Giddens, 1979, 1982). It challenges the views of sovereign power which, at their furthest reach, embraced the fiction of supreme 'super-agency' while denying authentic sovereignty to others: an overarching 'A' imposing its will on the many 'B's. Concepts of the ruling class, ruling state and ruling culture or ideology overwhelmed the consciousness of subjects, thereby creating false consciousness (and explaining the absence of the absence of Marx's revolutionary predictions). In this way, writers like Lukes (1974) accepted the problematic of 'hegemony' (Gramsci, 1971) or 'dominant ideology' (Abercrombie et al, 1980) and presumed to know, unproblematically, what the real interests of the oppressed really were.

The recognition that the space and ambiguity in which resistance is fostered does not lead to a transformation of prevailing power relations; that it only reinforces those power relations is the sobering implication of the Foucauldian-influenced tradition (Clegg, 1979; Knights and Willmott, 1989; Knights and Morgan, 1991). The death of the sovereign subject also killed originating sources of action: none were to inhabit the post-structural world since the pervasiveness of power relations makes them difficult to resist. Prevailing discourses are experienced as fact, which makes alternatives difficult to conceive of, let alone enact. In addition, the production of identity confers a positive experience on individuals (Knights and Willmott, 1989). It transforms 'individuals into subjects who secure their sense of what it is to be worthy and competent human beings' (Knights and Morgan, 1991, p. 269). Consequently, resistance has a price to pay – the positive effects of power, as experienced in the individual's sense of him or herself, have to be repudiated as part of any emancipatory process. A critical questioning of one's beliefs may 'estrangle the individual from the tradition that has formed his or her subjectivity' (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992: 447).

Another limitation on resistance came from Foucault's attack on modernist assumptions that with knowledge comes 'truth.' Foucault regarded the concept of ideology – which helped to explain why individuals did not act on their 'real' interests– as a 'falsehood' whose relational opposition to 'truth' can never be too far away. By demonstrating how the 'truths' and 'falsehoods' of particular discourses had been constituted historically, Foucault showed that language cannot mask anything; it simply represents possibilities. No assumption of reality exists as

anything more than its representation in language and, consequently, no situation is ever free from power. With knowledge only comes more power.

[T]ruth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general' politics of truth: that is, the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; and the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980: 131).

The idea that power/knowledge could not be decoupled meant that salvation was not to be found in privileged understandings and attempts to discover a 'genuine' order. Thus the modernist idea that demystifying processes and structures of domination would help the subjugated to escape from them and set up new structures that were free from power was shaken to its roots.

No longer a disinterested observer, acutely aware of the social and historical positioning of all subjects and the particular intellectual frameworks through which they are rendered visible, the researcher can only produce knowledge already embedded in the power of those very frameworks. No privileged position exists from which analysis might arbitrate (Clegg and Hardy, 1996: 3).

Claims to know the real interests of any group, other than through the techniques of representation used to assert them, could not survive this re-conceptualization of power. Accordingly critical writers started to view their phenomenon of choice afresh and to consider the implications for resistance.

The result was a theoretical struggle between those who contended that Foucault's work was compatible with the idea of resistance (e.g., Smart, 1985, 1986, 1990; Sawicki, 1991; Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994) and those who argued that his work was antithetical to notions of liberation and

emancipation (e.g., Hoy; 1986; Said, 1986; Walzer, 1986; White, 1986; Ashley, 1990; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1999). Emerging from this debate came a more nuanced view of resistance. Wrestling with not only with Foucauldian pessimism, but also the 'advent of corporate cultural manipulation, electronic surveillance and self-managing teams', critical depictions of workplace resistance seemed to 'herald the demise of worker opposition' as studies showed 'totalizing portrayals of new management controls' (Fleming and Sewell, 2002: 858). Some blamed Foucault for writing resistance out of the story (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1999). Others used Foucault to reconceptualize resistance in governmental terms: if management practice targeted 'the hearts and minds of workers' Fleming and Spicer (2002) to produce 'engineered selves' (Kunda, 1992), 'designer selves' (Casey, 1995) and 'enterprising selves' (du Gay, 1996), then definitions of resistance needed to be less conspicuous, less organized and more subtle (Fleming and Spicer, 2002). Accordingly, recent studies have included more mundane, micro, individualist, and localized forms of resistance (e.g., Murphy, 1998; Ezzamel, et al., 2001; Tretheway, 1997; Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Knights and McCabe, 2000; Fleming and Sewell, 2002; Fleming and Spicer, 2003).

POWER AND CHANGE: SELECTIVE SUBVERSION?

Our earlier analysis shows that change management initially dealt with critical developments in the conceptualization of power by ignoring them and clinging to unitary assumptions. When practice did not prove consistent with these assumptions, change management then appropriated critical insights. Thus, when employees refused to conform to the unitary view, managers abandoned the original humanist principles and adopted the power tactics worthy of any self-respecting

pluralist; when conflict proved inconvenient, the instrumental aspects of the management of meaning were incorporated into change management strategies. In this way, change management subverted critical goals of emancipation by selectively employing strategies for managerial purposes. This is not to say that this was necessarily a conscious or deliberate move. In fact, it is more likely to have been an emergent strategy – as ideas from critical theory started to seep out into the wider academic and practitioner arena, ideas that were useful were adopted in a de-contextualized fashion that stripped usage from underlying assumptions and resulted in the uneasy jostling of unitary and pluralist approaches.

Similar moves seem to be occurring in the case of Foucault's insights. At first glance, Foucauldian conceptualizations of power pose problems for organizational change: if sovereignty is dead, how can managers use power to bring about change? Notwithstanding this potential difficulty, these ideas are infiltrating change management (Grant et al., 2002) as indicated by table 4 in the chapter by Bradshaw and Boonstra, which talks of 'deep personal power' as defined by authentic existence (self awareness through reflection), critical consciousness (deep learning and political awareness), scepticism (questioning) and defiance (disobedience). What can we detect from these as yet undeveloped strategies for change management?

We argue that these strategies simply ignore the inconvenient aspects of Foucault's work, while colonizing those that offer potential for change management. Thus, the inability to pull the strings of power, associated with a view of power that 'is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth' (Foucault, 1980: 98), is reinterpreted as a system of

power that is ‘inherently diffused and shared among individuals’ that allows individuals ‘to become potentially active agents.’ (Bradshaw and Boonstra, chapter 4.1). The net is appropriated; the problem of strategic agency is ignored. Similarly, to counter the disciplinary gaze individuals are exhorted to be ‘authentic’ by ‘acting in congruence with one’s own values and beliefs’ and to stand ‘outside dominant discourses’. Foucault’s gaze is acknowledged; his disavowals of the authentic self and the possibility of standing outside discourse are rejected.

In reinterpreting Foucault for managerial purposes, change programs hone in on one aspect of Foucauldian-inspired work in particular – the notion of identity. If power is productive of identity, then identity becomes a target of change programs – it is no longer enough for employees to believe that change is good; now they must *feel* it. The very emotions of the employee are at stake, which must now be made consistent with and supportive of change programs (e.g., French and Delahaye, 1996; Vince and Broussine, 1996). The hearts and souls of employees are to be won over to the change effort. Perhaps that is what explains the selectivity and the subversion of the change literature – never quite able to discard the loving memory of its T-group history, the change management literature would like everyone to be on board, committed to what can only be the common good. And, if that is not possible, then power can be used to try and keep the hearts and minds of employees on track.

POWER AND CHANGE: CONCLUSIONS

We conclude with the acknowledgement that organizational change inevitably involves power: those who fulfill change agency roles in organizations, as well as those who wish to sabotage or resist others involved in such roles, must steer their

strategies through the use of power. Proponents and opponents of change alike have to be good players in the game of power and good game players will be those who can creatively improvise around political themes, using governmental tactics such as image building and releasing selective information; those who can scapegoat opponents or create alliances to encircle them, networking with significant others and compromising them when necessary; those who can be ruthless strategists as the occasion demands, manipulating rules when needs be. Such skills need to be deployed in a context of specific organizational features, stakeholders and political entrepreneurship, all of which must be mastered on the basis of formal and tacit warrants for power, produced through accounts that create reputations and identities as they seek to achieve outcomes.

Additionally, players in the game of organizational change need to be able to ask questions about the ways in which to characterize their power games. Are they ethically acceptable? Are they warranted in terms deemed contextually reasonable? Can they account for them plausibly? What will be the consequences for those whose identities are involved? What aspects of whose identity will be weakened, strengthened, or unchanged? These players must address the appropriate *degree* of politics deployed; the acceptability of the political means engaged, and the extent to which they can create an appearance of legitimacy of the political goals for which they strive (Buchanan and Badham, 1998). To manage change is to be politically competent. Those change agents who are not politically skilled will fail but their failure will not discredit the need for change so much as merely strengthen the governmental resolve to get it right next time. Perversely, much of the organizational

change management literature will only assist their failure, because of its lack of pragmatism about power.

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