2.13 Some Dare Call it Power

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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). This seemingly simple definition, which presents the negative, rather than the positive, aspects of power has been challenged, amended, critiqued, extended, and redefined over the years, but it nonetheless remains the starting point for a remarkably diverse body of literature. Behind it lies a series of important struggles, not just concerning different conceptualizations of power, and different traditions of social science but also in the interplay between critical and managerialist thought as well as between academic and practitioner discourses. There are, then, a multitude of different voices that speak to and of power and a variety of contradictory conceptualizations result. The two dominant voices - the functionalist and the critical (use simple categorizations) - each communicate with each other and refer to quite different lineages of earlier work. The former has adopted a managerialist orientation whose underlying assumptions are rarely articulated, much less critiqued. The latter has been an appraoach pragmatic concept, often to use but also easy to abuse. The latter has confronted issues of dominance and exploitation head on but, some would argue, in ways that appear to be increasingly less relevant.

The aim of this chapter is to explore these different voices and to reflect on the changes that have occurred since the last edition of this chapter. The first section explores the historical development of functionalist and critical voices. It discusses the broader heritage of Marx and Weber concerning power, followed by easy management work on power. The second section shows how subsequent developments built on these respective approaches, in many respects, pulling them further apart. An analysis of this work shows how the different voices have continued to follow divergent trajectories. The third section focuses on the insights provided by Foucault, and the supposed end of sovereignty, which had such an impact on this field of study in the late 1980s and early 1990s, radically changing our understanding of power. The fourth section reviews power and resistance in the light of Foucault's influence to discuss some of the developments in this area over the last 10 years, as well as to connect to some previously neglected streams such as Sennett's ideas converging total institution, which we believe are particularly relevant for making sense of the events that have shaped our lives in recent years.

The Founding Voices

This section examines some of the key works 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 perspective, this body of work has focused on the existence of conflicting interests and has examined power in a dialectical manner. As a result, it has advanced our understanding of organizational structures in a way that serves certain, but not all, interest groups. We then examine Goffman's work on total institutions. Finally, we examine the work developed more centrally within the field of management, less interested in how power might be used to dominate and to forge specific interests, this body of work takes for granted the ways in which power is distributed in informal, 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 is to consider the operation of interests. This approach is, however, constrained by the fact that the interests of the organization can be so diverse that they may conflict (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 interests of the organization, they are likely to be attuned to the general conditions of economic domination and subordination in organizations, as theorists of the left from Marx onwards have defined them (e.g., for instance, Marcuse 1969: 106 for an identification of these conditions).

Marcus (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. In the view of Marx, and much subsequent theory, only collective class-based action presents an appropriate opportunity for strategic agency. Economic conditions regulate the context in which labour is sold and capital employs. At the outset, two classes are defined: those who possess capital and those who do not. The latter have creative, differently trained and on one dimension, but that the fact that they are obliged to offer their labour on the market is what renders them, necessarily, as sellers.

In this way, power is defined as the capacity to control the flow of labour power and thus as a foundation of the working class. While relations concerning production, property, ownership and control are inscribed into 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.

Not long after Marx’s death, Max Weber rendered Marx’s view more complex by considering relations of production as well as relations of production, questioning the dichotomous representation. While Weber acknowledged that power did derive 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 derived from the knowledge of operations as much as from ownership. Organizations could be differentiated in terms of people’s ability to control the methods of production, as embedded in diverse occupational identities and technical relations at work. It is from these identities and 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 used. He questioned the simple assumption that workers viewed the world that did not correspond to Marxist theory must, by definition, be merely a "false consciousness." 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 creativity in certain social relationships or to carry out forms of social action within the order governing the organizations (Weber 1978: 217). So, by focusing in the different possibilities for creativity, it becomes clear that organizational members have some control over their disposal to exercise power, both in challenge and reproduce the formal organization structure in which differential powers are vested, legitimized and reproduced. Thus, organizational members can indeed have an impact on power for their foundation and maintenance (Weber 1978: 342).

In this way, power represents a capacity embodied in a person who retains discretion over the application of capacity. From the employer’s point of view, the employer 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 use 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 already-lived embodiment of labour.

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 politics, particularly of alienation (Schacht 1971; Gomme and Waters 1972). Management is forever seeking new strategies and tactics through which to deflect resistance. The most effective and economical are thought to be those that substitute self-discipline for management. Less effective but basically more plausible, 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 hierarchies. Each rule system seeks to regularize meaning to control relations in organizations through the structure of formal organization design. Thus, a hierarchy is prescribed within which legitimate power is circumscribed.

Total Institutions
If hierarchy constrains power, how was it possible that some hierarchies claimed more total dominion than others? Why do people, much of the time, not resist? Obdience, in fact, is often a more perplexing question than resistance. Erving Goffman conducted one stream of research that sought to examine why some hierarchies claimed more total dominion than others.

A Canadian sociologist, Goffman (1961) used anthropological research to investigate how authority was configured in extreme contexts, in his term ‘total institutions.’ He chose extremes because the everyday mechanisms of authority and power were much more evident there than in the world of the corporate ‘organization man’ (Whyte 1968).

Total institutions are organizations that contain the totality of the lives of those who are their members. As such, people within them are cut off from any wider society for a relatively long time, leading an enclosed and formally administered existence. In such contexts, the organization has more or less monopoly control over its members’ everyday life. Goffman’s argument is that total institutions demonstrate in heighten and condensed form the underlying organizational processes that can be found, albeit in much less extreme cases, in more normal organizations.

Total institutions are often parts of a broader apparatus, such as a prison or detention center, where inmates are held against their will. They also include organizations founded on voluntary membership, for instance a professional army, a boarding school, a residential college or a religious retreat, such as a monastery or nunnery. What do these very different types of organizations have in common that make them total institutions? Each member’s daily life is carried out in the immediate presence of a large number of others. The members are very visible: there is no place to hide from the surveillance of others; and they tend to be strictly regimented. Life in a total institution is governed by strict, formal rational planning of time. (Think of school bells for lesson endings and beginnings, factory whistles, timetables, schedules and so on.) People are not free to choose how they spend their time; instead, their time is being spent according to a centrally directed plan. In such systems, people lose a degree of autonomy because of an all-encompassing demand for conformity to the authoritative interpretation of rules. Goffman’s analysis thus shows that the essential core of organization is power. These extreme forms of power, intensified by spatial concentration, isolation and surveillance left little room in which agency could be exerted – ideas that are to reappear and gain renewed interest in later years, with the influence of Foucault.

In summary, this founding research focused on the way in which power derived from owning and controlling means of production, a power that was reinforced by organizational rules and structures, which in extreme circumstances could remove virtually all scope for agency. Weber’s work provided more room for strategic manoeuvre than either Goffman’s or Marxism 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 power should be hierarchical. In other words, in this stream of research, power embedded in 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 (1967), who researched two USAF Benelux 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 centralized position within the workforce of the USAF base, relevant to the mission of the autonomous aircrew. The aircrew’s role 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 the technical design of tasks and their interdependencies best explain the operational distribution of power, rather than the formal prescriptions of the organization design (e.g. Mechanic 1962). In this way, researchers began to differentiate between formally prescribed power and ‘actual’ power, which was also regarded as illegitimate. Researchers’ ‘seldom regarded actual power’ but instead ‘stressed the rational aspects of organization to the neglect of unauthorized or illegitimate power’ (Thompson 1956: 290).

Also important was Crotzer’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 and who had a high degree of power over the other workers in the bureaucracy because they controlled the remaining source of uncertainty. Crotzer’s 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. As organizations attempted to behave as if they were systems (Cyert and March 1963), they did so in an uncertain environment. The ability to control that uncertainty thus represented a potential source of power. (Crotzer and Friedberg 1980) A theory emerged, called the ‘strategic contingencies theory of intra-organizational power’ (Hickson et al. 1979), and which was the basis of what the idea that power was related to uncertainty, or at least to its control. In this theory, the organization was conceptualized as comprising functional, interdependent sub-units, connected by the major task of the organization i.e. ‘cooperating with uncertainty’. The model ascribed the balance of power among the sub-units to imbalances in the extent to which they coped with this uncertainty and, in so doing, how they used their ‘differential power to function within the system rather than to destroy it’ (Hickson et al. 1971: 217). Similar to the strategic contingencies view of power is the resource dependency view (e.g. Pfeffer and Salancik 1974). It derives from the social psychological literature that Enterprise of Power (1962) 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. French and Raven 1960; Pettigrew 1973; Benbunan 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 cannot achieve closure on what the basis 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 perceived on an illegitimate or informal use of resources; while the legitimate system of authority, on the other hand, was taken for granted and rendered non-problematic.

Studies conducted in social psychology supported the idea that the legitimate system of authority is an extraordinarily powerful apparatus in its own right. Given authority, ordinary people do extraordinary things. For example, in Milgram’s (1963) research subjects were instructed to administer increasing levels of electric shocks to participants in a behavioural learning programme, when they gave incorrect answers to test questions, each shock to be higher than the one before. (No shock was actually administered – the participants were actors who performed the appropriate physical manifestations.) When the subjects were face-to-face with the participants, only 30% administered shocks when told to, but when the participants were moved out
of sight and earshot, over 69% did so. In other words, obedience flows more easily when the subjects of action are at a distance—when they can be transformed into objects. Incremental increases also made obedience more likely—once committed, people felt obliged to obey, regardless of the moral principles that they might hold. In organizational terms, complex divisions of labour, and the resulting sequential actions may make us complicit with—
and obedient to—other organizational members in our many, sequential interactions with them. In contrast, what inhibited obedience was plurality—by introducing another expert and instructed them to disagree about the command being given—
compliance declined (Milgram 1971). Thus, the presence of competing and conflicting voices increases the probability that people will think for themselves rather than just do what they are told. Thus, we might conclude that strong organizational cultures that suppress value difference are more likely to produce unreflective and sometimes inappropriate organizational action than more democratic and pluralistic settings.

Returning to total institutions, it is clear that these are organizational forms where we would least expect to find pluralism and difference:

the readiness to act against one's own better judgement and against the voice of one's conscience is not just the function of authoritative command, but the result of exposure to a single-minded, unidirec-
tional and monophasic source of authority... The voice of individual moral conscience is best heard in the context of critical and social discourse (Bauman 1989: 165-6).

Total institutions—organizations that presume to exercise strong cultural control over their members to the extent that they diminish pluralism—square the space in which civility, reflection and responsibility can thrive. For example, Haney et al. (1975) designed an experiment to create a mock prison. They divided the 25 male undergraduate volunteer subjects into two groups—prisoners and guards—and dressed them accordingly. Guards were charged with supervising prisoners. The experiment had to be aborted after less than 1 week as an escalatory chain of events occurred: the construed authority of the guards was enforced by the submission of the prisoners, tempting the guards to exercise increasingly illegitimate displays of power that led to further humiliation of the prisoners (Bauman 1989: 167). Bear in mind that the subjects were all normal, well-adjusted people before the experiment began; yet after 1 week they were playing their roles with such conviction that the experiment had to be abandoned because of the real possibility of harm to the 'prisoners.' The revelations of extreme prisoner abuse during the 2004 occupation of Iraq by the 'Coalition of the willing' led, by the US, demonstrate, yet again, the ease with which author-
ity in total institutions can lead to the abuse of power.

In summary, the comparison of this early work on power reveals three diverging streams of research. The first, 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 domi-
nation (see Barbalet 1985). Secondly, Goffman initi-
ated a concern with extreme cases of power and authority condensed in total institutions, which finds direct echoes in later experimental work by Milgram and Zimbardo and his colleagues, work whose findings prefigure the Iraq prison scandal.

Thirdly, the work that was more directly located in management tended to view power quite differ-
ently: existing organizational arrangements were not structures of domination but formal, legitimate, functional authority. Power was effectively resis-
tance, but of an illegitimate, dysfunctional kind. In other words, in studying 'power,' the early work speaks to different phenomena, and from quite dif-
ferent value positions. The Marxist/Weberian tradi-
tion equated power with the structures by which certain interests were dominated; Goffman's total institutions perspective saw authority leading seam-
lessly to illegitimate dysfunctional power, while the management theorists defined power as those actions that fell outside the legitimated structures, threatened organizational goals, and preserved a moral gulf between legitimate authority and illegit-
imate power.

Variations on Three Themes

Subsequent work in both these areas was designed to enhance and extend these foundational ideas as researchers directed their work principally at their own constituencies. Strategies of Domination: Manufacturing Consent

The various constituent parts of the critical litera-
ture 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. However, if resistance was to be expected, why did subordinate groups so often consent to their own subjugation? Equalizing power 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 chal-
lenge 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 Lukes (1974). He maintained 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 alterna-
tive 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, therefore, be con-

tined to observable conflict, the outcomes of deci-
sions 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. In the 'third dimen-
sion' of power, Lukes focused attention on the soci-
etal 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 chal-
lenge to their position.

Marx and Lukes espoused another stream of research on this issue, known as labour process theory (e.g. Braverman 1974; Burawoy 1979; Edwards 1979), which examined the day-to-day

minutiae of power and resistance built around the 'games' that characterize the rhythms of organiza-
tional life (Burawoy 1979). Studies also examined the historical patterns that structure the overall context of power, from simple, direct control permitted on surveillance through technical control based on the dominance of the employee by the machinery and particu-
larly the assembly line, to fully fledged bureau-
cratic control—Weber's rule by rules. In this tradition the focus is 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 Willmott 1985; 1989; Knights and Morgan 1991; Kellow and Knights 1993).

'Elsewhere, in general historical sociology, the notion of organizational outsourcing' (Mara 1986: 7) provided another answer to the question of why the dominated so frequently consent to their subor-
dination. Outsourcing works against certain groups either because they do not know how to resist or they know rather too much concerning the finility of such action. In the former case, the powerless remain so because they are ignorant of the ways 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, and easily outsourced. In the second situation, the organi-

tization is so overwhelming in power that the costs of resistance outweigh the chances of success or the benefits of succeeding. The necessity of daily com-
pulsion in order to earn one's living, the nature of busy work, arduous routine and ceaseless activity—such techniques of power may easily discipline the blithestr of theoretically free spirits.

Strategies of Total Institutions: Denying Morality

Arendt (1944) wrote an account of the trial of Adolf Eichmann, one of Hitler's deputies, the Head of the Department for Jewish Affairs. He led the Reich's effort for the Final Solution, efficiently organizing the roundup and transportation of millions of Jews to their deaths at infamous camps such as Auschwitz, Treblinka and Bergen-Belsen. It was Arendt who coined the memorable phrase 'the banality of evil' to register her interpretation of the events surrounding the trial. Eichmann's defense was important because it posed the question of the extent to which a person who is obedient to organizational
authority can be held accountable as an individual for his or her actions.

The renowned sociologist, Buzan (1989) has confirmed to confront these questions essentially, he notes how central aspects of organizations contribute to the ease with which organizational malfeasance can occur. At the heart is a moral question concerning the internalization of power and ethics: Why do ordinary people in organizations do morally bad things when asked to do so? What aspects of an organization make unquestioning obedience feasible? It has been suggested that three organizational attributes make this phenomenon more probable (Buzan 1975): first, sanction from higher authority — when a strong leader tells you to do things, you might feel there is a good reason to actually do them; secondly, when the actions that exact the organizational action in question are routinized and you cannot see where and how your task fits into the big picture, nor can you see its consequences; thirdly, when those who are the victims of the action are dehumanized.

Buzan (1989:101) regards moral standards as being irrelevant for the technical success of the bureaucratic organization. When we master a technique, our skill has its own charm, aesthetics and beauty, and we can take sheer delight in using it, irrespective of its moral effects. Technical responsibility differs from moral responsibility in that it forgets that the action is a means to something other than itself. For instance, as a master of logistics, Eichmann was enormously proud of his achievements in the complex scheduling of trains, camps and death. Organizational power expressed in terms of technical accountability and responsibility for results expressed in a purely quantifiable form has two profound effects. First, it makes action utterly transparent — the targets are achieved or they are not. Secondly, one’s actions are relieved of moral indeterminacy — if one is authorized to do something and given targets to achieve by superordinates guiding strategies and plans, obedience surely is appropriate, and authority should be served.

This view draws attention to organization work as a ceaseless round of activity. Most organizational members are in the middle of organizational chains whose links are not always clear. People are not always aware of the consequences of what they do and do not do — after all, most of the time they are just doing what they are told (shred those files, write those cheques, dispatch those troops, maintain those train schedules). Divisions of labour in the complex chains enable us to keep a distance from the effects, we can represent them in terms of intermediary forms of data (skill rates, efficiency statistics and so on) and our moves minute cogs in a bureaucratic machine necessarily intermeshed with so many others. We don’t even have to try to understand the totality. The system of which we are a part is responsible, not us. When these actions are also performed at a distance on people defined as administrative categories, as less than human, the enter becomes the application of pure technique. When whatever is being worked on can be represented quantitatively, as a bottom-line calculation, it is so much easier to make rational decisions (cut costs, trim fat, speed throughput, increase efficiency, defeat the competition) without concern for the human, environmental or social effects of these decisions.

Strategies of Management: Defeating Conflict

The management literature took a different approach — instead of focusing exclusively on 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; Pfeffer 1981; 1992; Schweb 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 1981:7).

Such definitions evoke the idea of an (almost) ‘fair’ fight, where one group (usually senior management) is forced to use power to overcome the opposition of another (perhaps interdepartmental, or co-active power rather than coercive power): the former needs developing, while the latter needs diminishing. In this way organizations can be developed democratically as places where people learn to co-operate in power-with others, especially managers and workers. In a democracy, people can exercise power at the grassroots level through participation, pluralism, empowerment and education. According to Pettigrew, democratic diversity had great advantages over more authoritarian homogeneity; it enriches society, rather than feeding an society and eventually corrupting it.

Follett’s concerns with democracy and power were not, however, widely shared by later management theorists, who were more inclined to focus on the exercise of power not as an act of democracy, but as an aberration within a given structure of dominance (Fert 1979). 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. Using such a narrow definition (see Fert 1987) also obscures the true workings of power and depolitices organizational life (Clegg 1989a). It paints an ideologically conservative picture that implicitly advocates the status quo and hinders 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; b, also: Ramon et al. 1980; Dretz 1985; Knights and Willmott 1992; Willmott 1995).

Managing Meaning: The Creation of Legitimacy

Some management researchers did start to question these assumptions as they became interested in power as legitimation (Asley and Schudra 1984). 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 with 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 placed or around by them. In Himmelstein’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: 85), who 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 usage designed to both create legitimacy for one's own demands and to 'de-legitimize' the demands of others.

This work acknowledges that political actors do not always define success in terms of winning in the face of confrontation where there is always 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 (Rasson et al. 1980; Frost 1989). In this way, power is mobilized to influence behaviour indirectly by giving outcomes and decisions certain meanings; by legitimizing and justifying them.

Pfeffer (1981) 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 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 (1981) 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 steps short of acknowledging that power can be used to prevent conflict and opposition. There is, however, an inconsistency in Pfeffer's argument; if symbolic power is effective enough to 'quiet' opposition in part, why not use it as an attempt to prevent opposition from arising in the first place? The only factor preventing Pfeffer from reaching this conclusion appears to be his refusal to acknowledge the existence of power in situations other than those characterized by conflict and opposition (Pfeffer 1981: 7).

The management 'school' thus remained distant from the more critical work on domination. The majority of writers continued to focus on dependency and to define power in terms of conflict and illegitimacy. 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 organizations from a far more comfortable and familiar position – as apolitical management tools.

The End of Sovereignty

Neither critical nor managerial conceptualizations of power remained fixed. In fact, important changes were about to occur as 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, b; Alvesson and Deetz 1986; Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan 1998; Mumbly 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 insulated and normalized through routine aspects of organizations – much closer to Weber's emphasis on the importance of discipline in phenomena such as Taylorism, than to 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 instruments. Historically, the tendency is for a greater instrumentation to develop as surveillance moves from a literal supervisory gate to more complex forms of observation, reckoning and comparison. Surveillance, whether personal, technical, bureaucratic or legal, ranges through forms of supervision, rationalization, formalization, mechanization, legislation and design that result in 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 19th century was linked to the emergence of new techniques of discipline appropriate for more impressionable, large scale settings in which the community conditions, whereby every person knew their place, no longer prevailed (see Foucault 1977; Buzan 1982). Previous localized, moral regulation, perceived on the transparency of the person to the gaze of the community, was no longer viable. 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 techniques. Rather, people copied what was already available, creating their own world in isomorphic likenesses of key features they already knew. Disciplinary techniques had been readily available in the monastic milieu of religious vocation, the military, educational institutions, garrison towns, city halls, etc., and their effectiveness had been established during the past two centuries. At a more general level, the 'disciplinary gaze' of surveillance had shaped the development of disciplines of knowledge 19th century in such areas as branches of social welfare, statistics and administration (Foucault 1977).

Organizational, the 20th century development of the personnel function under the 'human relations' guidance of Mayo (1915) may be seen to have had a similar jurisprudential role (see Clegg 1979; Bay 1986; Townley 1993). Such mechanisms are often local, diverse and unco-ordinated. They form no grand strategy. Yet, abstract properties of people, goods and services can be produced that are measurable, gradable and assessable in an overall assessment of organizational performance. In this way, the principles of surveillance that Foucault challenged sovereign notions of power: power was no longer a determinist phenomenon; to be successfully manipulated by legitimate managers, power must first act against recalcitrant, illegitimate resistance by lower orders. Instead, all actors operated within an existing structure of dominance – 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 was also important in 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, decoupled from the political, 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 attribute characterizes 'men' or 'women' instead the subjectivity of these labelled as such culturally and historically variable and specific (Clogg and Hardy 1990: 3).

Not surprisingly, Foucauldian insights played an important role in the work on gender. While early contributions (e.g. Gates 1977) had already noted the way in which women were systematically subjected to power inside organizations in ways that were ineradicable from their broader social role, Foucault's work provided an added impetus for work on gender, as well new ways of conceptualizing gender (Mumbly 2001). Scholars became increasingly aware not only of the gender blindness of organizations, but also of organization studies itself (see Mills and Tannen 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. 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. So, while gender and sexuality are pervasive aspects of organizational life and organizational identity is regularly defined through gender and the projection of forms of masculinity and femininity implicated in it, the gender bias inherent in the study of organizations helped to preserve the status quo, rather than challenge it (e.g. Pringle 1989). How else could the vantage point and privileges of white, usually Anglo Saxon, normally American, males have been taken
for granted for so long (Calas and Smrček 1992)? See the chapter by Calas and Smrček in this volume for a more recent discussion of these issues.

Power and resistance 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 subject to regimes of specific organizational signification, at the same time as they are interpellated by extra-organizational issues such as ethnicity, gender, class, age and other phenomena. Embedded identities are salient only in as much as they are socially recognized and organizationally contingent. 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, for example, their being the precise target of various anti-discrimination laws. Accordingly, organizations can be constituted as structures of patriarchal domination, ethnic domination, age domination and so on. Such matters are clearly contingent: most organizations may have aspects of one or more of these forms of dominancy, but it is not necessarily so.

The issues of identity and subjectivity continue to interest researchers. Complaints about the misuse of power (Thompson 1990) have led to an emphasis on the construction of identity from a nexus of power relations, existential concerns and prevailing discourses, such as capitalism, patriarchy and sovereignities (Holmer-Nadesan 1996; Phillips and Hardy 1997). Categories of self have been seen as being constructed in ‘historically specific modes of production and contingent networks of social relations’ (O’Doherty and Willmott 2001: 472). Identity is complex: it is embedded in the webs of power that permeate social practices. Identity is also contingent; constantly (re)emerging out of the discourses in which it is positioned, even those identities which seek to oppose, resist or transgress the discourse. Cynical detachment, surface acting and impression management do not defend some self already there or maintain distance between the inner self and the outer world but, instead, are a key part of identity formation processes, framing it as much as the relations of production, strategies of control and disciplinary mechanisms (Fleming 2003). Consequently, there is no genuine ego, inner self or a priori subject to defend against incursions of power - the self is as much a product of power as something to be protected from it (Knights and Willmott 1989).

Organizations are an important site in which such identity formation occurs (Munby and Stohl 1991; Deetz 1992a; Tinkham 1997). In fact, all organizational practices, such as team-working, empowerment and TQM, confer opportunities for self-constitution to those grappling with the identities they frame, constitute and change (e.g. Hardy and Leith-O’Sheilven 1998; Knights and McCabe 2000; 2002). At the same time, it is important to remember that identity-work is only ever achieved against a lifetime of identity construction (despite some views of organization culture that seem to assume it can occur wholly within organizational space). Consequently, it is clear that 'public' organization must be interpellated by relations of power/knowledge which emanate from 'private' life (e.g. Tinkham 1997). Organizations are merely one of many arenas within which opportunities for the presentation of the self are available (Goffman 1959).

Power and Resistance Revisited

The discussion above shows the extent to which Foucault has influenced the study of power and resistance. It highlights the multi-faceted nature of organizational localities and shows how complex identities are subject to multivalent powers. Approaches inspired by his work seemed particularly well positioned to appreciate these struggles of power and resistance. Not because they were disposed to know in advance who the victorizes and vanquished dramatics personae should be, but because of their emphasis on the play of meaning, signification and action through which all organizational actors seek to script, direct and position all others.

One of Foucault’s most telling blows on modernist assumptions was his observation that knowledge and power are inseparable. He 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. Moreover, with knowledge only comes more power.

[Truth isn’t the reward of free spirits, the child of unprotected 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 1988: 131).]

Foucault demonstrated that bodies of knowledge – discourses – are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Foucault 1972: 49). In other words, discourses bring the social world into being through the way in which they constitute particular types of categories (Fairclough 1992; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Hardy and Phillips 1999), which both make sense of and construct social ‘reality’. In this way, discourse lays down the ‘conditions of possibility’ that determine what can be said, by whom and when (Hall 2001). According to Foucault, power represents a complex web of relations determined by systems of knowledge constituted in discourse.

Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. ... Power is not an institution, and not a structure either. It is a certain strength we are endowed with, the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society (Foucault 1979: 91).

Advantaged and disadvantaged alike are captured in this web (Deetz 1992a).

To the extent that meanings become fixed or reified in certain forms, which then articulate particular practices, agents and relations, this fixes them as power. Power is the apparent order of taken-for-granted categories of existence, as they are fixed and represented in a myriad of discursive forms and practices (Deeg 1988: 183).

The frame had shifted greatly: where once were managers and employees, legitimate hierarchies and dependencies, as well as strategic (if illegitimate contingencies) in the use of power, after Foucault (1976) the idea of power as a possession, as a thing held by the person, was untenable (Ferguson 1989). Some took this to mean as the end of agency (Reed 1998); others saw it as ushering in a fatalistic view of power in which nothing could be changed (Barnum and Parker 1993). Either way, if sovereignty is dead, how can managers exercise power over organizational members? Had managerial researchers followed these debates with much interest (which they did not appear to – although, as we shall see, it did stop some of them appropriating some ideas at a later date), they would have had to pose the question of how is managerial power possible? For critical researchers, there would be an equally pressing question: if managers were not in sovereign positions of control, but were relays in an overall apparatus of power, what was the sense of resistance?

Power and Discourse: The Matter of Agency

Foucault’s work has been criticized for ignoring both structure and agency – for refusing to recognize that discourses and the practices and structures that they constitute are ‘the direct expression of strategies of control and domination pursued by identifiable individuals, social groups, classes and movements’ that occur ‘within a wider historical and institutional context’ (Reed 1998: 197). Reed argues that Foucault, by rejecting any distinction between constraint and action, can explain neither how certain discourses come to be as powerful as they do, nor how change occurs (Reed 1998; also see O’Doherty and Willmott 2001). However, some researchers have shown that, by bringing structure back into the picture, it is possible to find a place for agency.

Critical discourse analysts build on Foucault’s work by acknowledging that discursive practices are ‘constrained by the fact that they inevitably take place within a constituted material reality, with pre-constituted objects and pre-constituted social subjects’ (Fairclough 1992: 60). Discourse as social action is thus engaged ‘within a broad framework of understanding, communication and interaction which is in turn part of broader socio-cultural structures and processes’ (Van Dijk 1997: 21).

Discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking content into
consideration. Discourses are always connected to other discourses which were produced earlier, as well as those which are produced synchronically and subsequently (Fairclough and Wodak 1997:77).

By conceptualizing context as the previously constructed meanings that have, over time, become sedimented into the prevailing discourses that shape how we make sense and act upon the world, we tap into the constraints that Foucault emphasized and, indeed, the structure for which Reed (1998) searches. Within such a conception of context, however, is room for manoeuvre (Hardy and Phillips 2004), since discourses are never totally fixed (Clegg 1989a). Consequently, power relations that appear insurmountable and unchangeable are nonetheless subject to some form of ongoing discursive negotiation and material support, which hold them in place (Mumby and Stehl 1991; Parker 1992; Fairclough and Wodak 1997). Moreover, situations are rarely hostage to a single discourse – multiplicities of discourse are usually at play from which ‘reality’ is constituted (e.g. Keeney et al. 1997; Aveson and Kärrman 2000a; b; Grant and Hardy 2004; Grant et al. 2004).

Discourses are never completely cohesively and devoid of internal tensions, and are therefore never able to totally determine social reality. They are always partial, often crosscut by inconsistencies and contradictions, and almost always contested to some degree. Second, actors are commonly embedded in multiple discourses. The tensions between these discourses produces a discursive space in which the agent can play one discourse against another, draw on multiple discourses to create new forms of interdiscursivity, and otherwise move between and across multiple discourses (Hardy and Phillips 2004:304).

Within these gaps, contradictions and tensions that reside within and among discourses lays the potential for people to exercise their agency. For instance, actors often try to use discursive latitude to shape understandings of a social situation within the constraints afforded by the previously constituted context or, in discursive terms, prevailing discourses and previous texts (Fairclough 1995). As a result, actors are able to draw on multiple discourses to create new forms of interdiscursivity, and otherwise move between and across multiple discourses (Fairclough and Wodak 1997:304).

A social institution is an apparatus of verbal interaction or an ‘order of discourse’. Each institution has its own set of speech events, its own differentiated settings and scenes, its cast of participants, and its own norms for their combination – a frame for action, without which they could not act (Fairclough 1995:38).

One way to examine the structure of power in organizations is to see it as a discursive product (Clegg 1975; Phillips et al. 2004) wherein certain social relations become ‘assembled and regimented’ in ways that sustain and reinforce ‘order and organization’. (O'Doherty and Willmott 2001:145).

Particular discourses produce structure and institutions through the exercise of an agency that is, in turn, constrained by existing structure and institutions. The movement is forever dialectical, never arrested, merely framed and sometimes re-framed in new ways at certain times. In this way we can combine a realist-based discourse analysis which accepts the sovereignities framed in the conversation with a social constructivist approach, which sees them as forever contingent on the play of the actors in creatively assembling and using the discourses (also see O’Doherty and Willmott 2001). With such an approach one can provide historical accounts of the ways in which discursive change and innovation enter into and reshape ongoing power struggles to make and remake the institutional status quo and the configuration of power relations that it reproduces (Reed 2004:418).

In this way, critical researchers still can analyze and expose the ways in which some actors prevail over others, within the confines of larger discursive settings. Discursive and extra-discursive realms can also be integrated. For example, as O’Doherty and Willmott (2001:464) note, while powerful discourses constitute, to use a catch-all phrase, ‘capitalism’,

capitalism exists ‘outside of language and text’. It is enacted through and reinforced by practices, behaviours and material entities – factories, products, machines, houses, money, poverty, unemployment, etc. – that are clearly ‘out there’. While this materiality derives meaning from language and interpretation, it undoubtedly also contributes to the discourses that surround and sustain it, through the ways in which experience shapes language and interpretation. In other words, critical researchers’ incorporation of Foucauldian and other postmodern insights has enriched – rather than stymied – their work (Phillips and Hardy 2002).

Most managerial researchers, on the other hand, appear to ignore Foucault altogether, although in some cases, for example work on change management, Foucauldian ideas do appear (e.g. Grant et al. 2002; Szaszczowiak-Sempuch 2003; Brodshaw and Boosstra 2004). In many respects, however, writers appear to have been highly selective in how they have interpreted his work.

Thus, the inability to pull the strings of power is reinterpreted as a system of power that is inherently diffused and shared among individuals that allows individuals to become potentially active agents. … The net of power is appropriated: the problem of strategic agency is ignored. Similarly, to counter the disciplinary gaze individuals are endorsed to be ‘authentic’ by acting in congruence with their own values and belief to stand outside dominant discourses. Foucault’s gaze is acknowledged; his discourses of the authentic self and the possibility of standing outside discourses are rejected (Hardy and Clegg 2004:359).

In other words, the inconvenient aspects of Foucault’s work have been largely ignored, while those that offer potential for change management have been colonized and cultivated.

Change programmes have hitherto focused 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 programmes – it is no longer enough for employers to believe that changing the self is good; now they must feel it’ (Hardy and Clegg 2004:359). In other words, the subjectivities of employers are now the target of change programmes and must be made consistent with and supportive of them (e.g. Fink and Dabrowe 1996; Vince and Bruunise 1996). Thus, managers have accrued change through cultural engineering (e.g. Kandola 1992; Casey 1995; du Gay 1996), emotional labour (see Sturdy and Fineman 2001; Fineman, this volume), managerial techniques associated with ‘leapfrogging’ (Dreher and Fettke 1996), team work (Sewell and Wilkinson 1992; Parker 1993) and electronic monitoring (Fernie and Mertset 1999) to target identity in what some critics have described as a process of totalization, control and will (Willmott 1993; Reed 1998). This, in turn, raises important consequences for resistance, to which we now turn.

Power and Resistance

Managerial change programmes, such as those described above, exert powerful normative controls through emotional dependence and organisational identification (see Gabriel 1999), leading some researchers to ask how employee resistance is possible when ‘corporate relations of power target the hearts and minds of workers’ (Fleming and Spicer 2002:65)? When panoptic controls are added to these normative controls, through a variety of spatial and temporal monitoring arrangements (Gabriel 1999), resistance seems to face even greater hurdles. It now has to overcome ‘control over exterior spaces’ as well as control of an ‘interior world’ that was ‘colonized by hegemonic norms and values’ (Fiske 1997:4). Nor is much reassurance to be derived from the theoretical literature. Foucault’s work had already pointed out that resistance does not lead to a transformation of prevailing power relations, but merely reinforces them (Clegg 1979; Knights and Willmott 1989; Knights and Morgan 1991). In addition, researchers noted that the reproduction of identity that emanates from power/knowledge relations confers a positive experience on the individual (Knights and Willmott 1989). As a result, resistance exerts a heavy price from would-be dissenters who have to repudiate their sense of self, estranging ‘the individual from the tradition that has formed his or her subjectivity’ (Abelson and Willmott 1992:447). In other words, both empirically and theoretically, disciplinary control appears to be so complete that the space for, never mind the outcome of, resistance, is severely constrained. Whether managers are running the show – as the empirical literature has seemed to suggest – or whether they are equally constrained by disciplinary power – as the theoretical work indicated – hardly matters: the opportunities for employee resistance
do not look promising. And, if the prospects for resistance are poor, what are the prospects for the study of resistance?

Thompson and Ackroyd (1995: 629) went on the offensive – challenging the idea that the prospects of resistance were limited. Instead, they argued that researchers would surely find resistance if only they had ‘the time and inclination to look for it’. It would appear that researchers had plenty of both, as a flurry of articles on workplace resistance appeared, apparently written by researchers intent on finding resistance even in places where none was supposed to exist (e.g. Webh and Palzer 1998; Bain and Taylor 2000; Taylor et al. 2002). It took persistence and ingenuity to identify some of these practices as resistance, now that it was no longer simply collective, organized action. Today, resistance has been so transformed that it is now innumerable, subtle and unorganized (Fleming and Sewell 2003), as well as indirect, unplanned and mundane (Prasad and Prasad 2000). It includes humour (Collinson 1992), irony (Trevithay 1997), cynicism (Fleming and Spencer 2001), scepticism (Knights and McCabe 2002), parody (Trevithay 1997), hidden transcripts (Murphy 1998), birthing (Setirli and Gottfried 1990) and fiddles (Webb and Palzer 1998) amongst its myriad practices. Resistance used to stand in ‘impossible opposition’ to power exercised by an elite through ‘oppressive, injurious and contemptuous means to secure their control’ as people fought back ‘in defence of freedom, democracy and humanity’ (Flel 1997: 1). Now resistance is more akin to ‘leakage’ where, as in Hale’s (1975) novel, Josef Švejk ‘resists the discipline of the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Army through subtle forms of subversion that are “invisible” to his superiors (and often to peers too); but which nonetheless undermine organizational power relationship in disruptive if not openly rebellious ways (Fleming and Sewell 2003: 859).7

It is no longer sufficient to assume that resistance arises from innate political subjectivities which are opposed to, or marginalized by oppressive prac-
tices, but merely those who benefit from relations of domination act to reproduce them, while the oppressed have a natural interest in over-turning the situation. Instead, resistant political subjectivities are constituted through positions taken up not only in relation to authority – which may well leave people in awkward, ambivalent, down-right contra-
dictory and dangerous places – but also through experiences which are not so quickly labelled ‘power’ such as desire and anger, capacity and abil-
ity, happiness and fear, dreaming and forgetting (Flel 1997: 1).

Resistance, it would seem, is no longer what it was, although it would appear that there is a lot more of it about.

Although there may be more resistance about, how effective is it? In what ways do irony, fiddles, cynicism, etc. overcome the power of organizations?

In an era of hypocritical organizations (Brunsson 1989), organizations are increasingly characterized by discursive ‘spins’ on the part of their ever more sophisticated managers, who produce homes within which so-called resistances can flourish and without which real discontent might emerge. Custodians of organizational hypocrisy would be disappointed if they did not generate some resistance by whingeing. However, to long as resistance can be contained and ‘spin’ applied to it, then organizational power is not affected. Perhaps this is why there remain graphic forms of organized resistance – NTL, the Salt bomb-
ing, the Battle in Seattle to name but a few – albeit utilizing new global, networked forms of organization. So formal indicators of resistance, such as strike rates, associated with some classical concep-
tions of identity such as social class, may be declin-
ing in some societies but less institutionalized forms of resistance that cleave around classical issues of identity, such as terrorist bombs and insurrec-
tionary warfare, are on the rise in others. Nor is it that more nuanced forms of resistance are so new, for example, won’t Švejk resist discipline in the 1926th. Maybe, it is not the practice of resistance that has changed so much as the study and defini-
tion of it, which is only now catching up with its diversity and complexity.

Power and Reflexivity

Foucault’s idea that power/knowledge could not be decoupled dealt another blow to researchers – it meant that salvation was no longer to be found in privileged academic understandings.

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).

Chains 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, and researchers were forced to turn to an explicit consideration of a range of reflexive techniques to view their phenomenon of choice anew and to consider their role in its analy-
sis. Ten years ago, we emphasized the importance of reflexivity, which we defined as conducting research in a way that turns back upon and takes account of itself (Clegg and Hardy 1996). Since then, researchers whose theoretical convictions range from realism to postmodernism have taken up the case of reflexivity (Breuer 2000; Johnson and Dobsley 2003). Weick (1999: 803) has argued that, recently, theory con-
struction has become largely an ‘exercise in disci-
plined reflexivity’. Foucault’s influence and the concomitant growth in the analysis of discourse, while creating challenges for researchers, has been profound, providing opportunities to reflect on the assumed and constructed nature of data and innovative ways of engaging with it (Alvesson and Kärnänen 2006). We have become more aware of the knowledge making enterprise (Weick 1999), the institutional, social and political processes that shape it (Callis and Smitich 1999) and our role as individual researchers within it (Hardy et al. 2001; Phillips and Hardy 2002).

Reflexivity can be a double-edged sword – it is occupying an increasingly glorified and privileged position (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000), as well as leading to some narcissistic (O’Doherty and Willmott 2001), self-indulgent and circular (Weick 1999) practices. There are costs of reflexivity – it takes time, brain power and text space (Harley et al. 2004). It may be used as a rhetorical device – cynical or otherwise – designed to demonstrate researcher credentials in critical or postmodern cir-
cles (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000; Grant and Hardy 2004). Moreover, despite different ways or techniques that help the researcher to introduce reflexivity into a text, all are riven with contradic-
tions, tensions and paradoxes (Harley et al. 2004).

None are perfect. As Foucault (1980) pointed out, every social setting has its own politics of truth discourse that makes it possible to distinguish true and false statements – and reflexivity is rapidly becoming one of ours.

Conclusions

Many management researchers would see power as somewhat irrelevant and marginal to central con-
cerns of current organization theory, an argument that has been put recently by Hinings and Greenwood (2002: 411) in asking what is the point of organization theory today? When organization theory was conceived as the sociology of organiza-
tions, the point was clear; it was to address the ques-
tion, ‘what are the consequences of the existence of organizations?’ The question has two elements: First, how organizations affect the pattern of privi-
lege and disadvantage in society; second, how privi-
lege and disadvantage are distributed within organizations (Hinings and Greenwood 2002: 411).

Both refer to central issues of power in relation to organizations. The authors argue that the former question has all but disappeared from discussion in the 1980s and 1990s, while the latter receives only scant treatment as the field has increasingly adopted a business perspective. When these questions are asked from a sociological perspective, the focus is on control and its consequences, i.e. power; but when asked from a business perspective, the focus is on the organizational design of efficient and effective solutions to the problems of business owners. Ignoring the sociological does have, however, significant business implications. One consequence of this shift in emphasis is the effective marginalization of a capacity to address questions such as the corpo-
rate collapses of Enron, WorldCom and Arthur Andersen, among many others, as well as the ability to address the widespread disclosure of corporate malfeasance.

As we write this chapter, we cannot be oblivious to other framing factors, of course, such as the US-
led coalition’s occupation of Iraq and the ‘War on Terrorism’. In the wake of the scandals around the abuse of power by prison guards and others in the various goals and detention centers, it would be sur-
prising if Goffman, Millgram and Zimbardo do not enjoy a citation surge. Similarly, one might expect the Foucauldian legacy, with its emphasis on sur-
veillance and new forms of governmental, to see continued interest. As power operates through knowledge, through everyday ways of sensemaking that are more or less institutionalized in disciplinary knowledge, the normality of the normal power relations constructed as such. New forms of panoptic surve-
lillance continue to be relevant (e.g. Sewell 1998), but
also the way in which morality and obedience implicate each other. Similarly, the rhetoric of the War on Terrorists invites studies on the power of discourse, and often more of how discourse can and are exploited through the identities they create, the understandings they shape, and the actions they promote (e.g. Hardy and Phillips 2004; Murphy 2004). Other new directions, such as a concern with ‘circular’ and soft power have also emerged (Mauro 1998; Romme 1999; Courpasson 2000b, b).

There are, then, important business and social reasons that indicate the need for the continued study of power in organizations, and recent theoret- ical work, including – but not restricted to – that informed by Foucault offers important insights into some recent organizational practices. Still, we must remark, on the whole, however, that few North American theorists seem to find Foucault of much interest. For instance, when Ozikon and Passadows (1995) made a comparison of six-citation networks in European and North American organization studies, they identified Foucault as the seventh-most-cited researcher in Organization Studies, just behind Weber, who was fifth. Neither Weber nor Foucault, nor many others influential in the European list, made the top ten in the comparable ACQ-based lists – Weber just in at the bottom of the ‘hot 100’, while Foucault didn’t rate a mention. Only 16 articles have appeared with power in the title in the top three US journals in the last 10 years, and none made any reference to Foucault at all.

The times are right for a renewed emphasis on power; while the end of the Cold War and the collapse of consumerism deflated many earlier Marxist critiques, in the ensuing decade the unbridled exercise of power in organizations has become evident as something politically repugnant, through collapses such as World Com and Enron, such that even the mainstream has to concede that there was something rotten in the existing state of organization, through collapses of companies such as Enron and EDS, that even the mainstream has to concede that there was something rotten in the existing state of organization, through collapses of companies such as Enron and EDS.

In addition, the analysis of power has become more sophisticated in an era which, although all the other ‘pots’ it has been reported as being, is indubitably post-Foucauldian. And as we have remarked, the total institutions aspects of Foucault’s work resonate with contemporary abuses of power in organizations as well as with classical concerns in its sociology. Additionally, the recent formal integration of the critical management studies interest group into the Academy of Management, and the growing interest in critical thought among American scholars suggests an optim- istic scenario for the study of power. Similarly in Europe, Canada, and other countries around the world where organizational researchers have tradi- tionally been less reluctant to engage with the nuances of power, scholars continue to engage with concepts such as power, control and resistance. It is, then, far too soon to write off the centrality of power for the analysis of organizations simply because of its relative neglect in some quarters (Clegg 2002; Hings and Greenwood 2002).

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