**CHAPTER 7**

**POWER AND RESISTANCE AT WORK**

1. Perspectives on power and organizations
   1. Five bases for social influence (French & Raven, 1959):
      1. Positional power – A person exercises power by virtue of his or her position in an organizational hierarchy (also called “legitimate power”).
      2. Referent power – Power is rooted in the charisma of the person exercising influence.
      3. Expert power – Power is based on a person’s unique and needed knowledge and expertise.
      4. Reward power – Power is based in the ability to provide rewards such as promotions, pay raises, etc.
      5. Coercive power – This punitive form of power is the mirror image of reward power. Subordinates perceive that a negative outcome will occur if they do not comply.
   2. The community power debate
      1. Pluralists argued that power was equally distributed throughout society.
      2. Elitists argued that power was concentrated in the hands of the few.
   3. Dimensional Models of Power
      1. The One-Dimensional Model of Power
         1. Proposed by pluralist Robert Dahl, this model defines power as direct influence: “A has power over B to the extent that he [or she] can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.”
         2. Conflict is a condition for the exercise of power – the one who has the most power is the one who has issues resolved in his or her favor.
      2. The Two-Dimensional Model of Power
         1. Elitists challenged the one-dimensional model as too simplistic and proposed “the two faces of power” (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962/1963).
         2. This model proposes that not only does A have power over B when A persuades B to do something, but also when A prevents B from doing something.
         3. Power is exercised through non-decisions and the ability to shape discussions (“mobilization of bias”).
         4. Overt conflict does not need to be present for power to be exercised.
      3. The Three-Dimensional Model of Power
         1. Lukes (1974) extends the above models by arguing that no conflict (either overt or covert) needs to be present for power to be exercised.
         2. Lukes notes that A may exercise power over B by shaping B’s wants and desires. For example, advertising convinces us that we must have a particular product.
         3. Controlling organizational culture is another example of this third dimension of power. Employees are encouraged to “fit in” with the culture of the organization, internalizing ways of thinking and acting that serve the best interests of the organization.
2. Organizational Communication and Ideology
   1. Ideology works as an interpretive lens, shaping our understanding of what is good and what is possible.
      1. An example of ideology at work in the U.S. is the ideology of “individualism” which works as a construct that shapes meaning and possibilities for Americans.
      2. Ideology operates through communicative practices which highlight some ways of viewing the world and hides other ways.
         1. Terms are significant based on their position within a larger societal discourse.
         2. Communication does not simply represent the world but actively shapes it.
         3. Communication and meaning shapes and reflects societal power relations.
   2. Ideology obscures the relationship between social meanings and power relations in 3 ways (Giddens, 1979).
      1. Ideology represents particular group interests as universal.
      2. Ideology obscures or denies contradictions in society.
      3. Ideology functions to reify social relations.
   3. Although ideology works to maintain the status quo, there is always struggle over meaning as different social groups challenge the dominant ideology.
3. Examining Organizational Communication through the Lens of Power and Ideology
   1. Critical organizational communication scholars study organizations as sites of power and resistance.
      1. Critical scholars focus on struggles over meaning and organizational reality by exploring stories, rituals, metaphors, conversations and other communication phenomena.
      2. Critical scholars employ the concept of hegemony to challenge taken-for-granted ways of thinking.
      3. Critical scholars view the process of organizational identification as problematic when the company uses it to promote productivity over employee wellbeing.
   2. Corporate colonization (Deetz, 1992) has occurred as the corporation has become the dominant institution in society, shaping not only our work lives, but all spheres of life.
      1. One example of corporate colonization is our system of education.
         1. Education has become increasingly focused on skills training for the corporate world.
         2. Students are asked to act as consumers, gathering information instead of engaging with ideas.
         3. Knowledge is presented in a pre-packaged form (the textbook) that is a disposable commodity.
      2. Personal identity and work identity have become strongly connected and thus corporations attempt to indoctrinate people with their corporate philosophy.
         1. Normative control (Kunda, 1992) instills the corporate culture into each employee as the employee identifies with company goals.
         2. A “culture boot camp” does not teach employees the formal structure of the organization, but rather indoctrinates employees into the culture of organization, encouraging them to invest themselves in their work.
         3. “Burnout” is one consequence of this intense investment and while it is treated as problematic, it can also be viewed as a demonstration of a high level of organizational commitment.
   3. Resisting corporate colonization
      1. Employees often resist organizational control in various and subversive ways, undermining colonization and providing alternate possibilities.
      2. Examples of corporate control and employee resistance can be found in the organizational environment of flight attendants.
         1. Attendants resist airlines’ attempts to control their emotional expression by defining a smile in their own terms.
         2. Flight attendants resist the gender hierarchy and status norms of the airlines by using humor and irony to undermine them.
         3. Attendants resist corporate regulation of their movements by manipulating the system.
         4. Attendants resist efforts to control their appearance by dressing professionally but only focusing on the specifics of the prescribed appearance when they may be seen by a supervisor.
      3. Although the examples from airline attendants are not radical, and individually they do not challenge the corporate power structure, collective forms of resistance can lead to change.
4. Conclusion: Control processes in organizational life are complex.
   1. Organizational members are not passive recipients of organization control. They can both contribute to organizational sensemaking and resist organizational control.
   2. Control and resistance are in an interdependent relationship with each other.