**CHAPTER 14**

**COMMUNICATION, MEANINGFUL WORK, AND PERSONAL IDENTITY**

1. Introduction
   1. Our work shapes our sense of self.
   2. Doing meaningful work shapes our perception of self-worth.
2. Meaningful Work
   1. A Sense of Agency: Control over the way in which work is conducted.
      1. White-collar work not necessarily agency-granting.
      2. Resurgence of interest in blue-collar and “useful arts” work.
      3. Relates to clock time vs. task time (Chapter 3).
   2. Enhances Belonging or Relationships
      1. Gain a sense of identity from our relationships with others.
      2. Organizations encourage personal relationships at the workplace.
      3. Much relationship building and maintenance occurs via social media/online resources.
   3. Creates Opportunities for Influence
      1. Provides opportunities to impact the organization where we work.
      2. Increases with position in organizational hierarchy.
      3. Can use increased power to positively impact the lives of co-workers.
   4. Permits Use & Development of Talents
      1. We tire of jobs that don’t challenge/stretch us.
      2. *Horizontal hypermobility*: frequent, lateral changes of jobs (Florida, 2003)
   5. Offers a Sense of Contribution to the Greater Good
      1. Connects workers to a sense of a greater mission.
      2. Can frame mundane products (like cookies) with significant meaning so that workers feel as though they create something meaningful by participating in their creation.
   6. Provides Income Adequate for a Decent Living
3. Managing Work Identity: Historical Context
   1. **Reflexive modernization**: term used to describe the current condition in which we must search for meaning and stability outside of the traditional structures (like family, class, etc.)
   2. Current times marked by precarity, which prohibits long-term and long-range planning.
   3. **Solid or heavy modernity:** Bauman’s (2000) term to describe how Fordist capitalism rooted people to particular contexts for a long time.
   4. **Liquid or light modernity:** Bauman’s (2000) term to describe current precarious or short-term relationships people have to work and place
   5. Ontological security/social contract of work has changed in “light modernization”
      1. Workers bear the responsibility to be flexible and to adapt to changes
      2. Employees in constant state of insecurity
      3. Management fads come and go every year or so now, which adds to the instability
   6. Short-term capitalism brings about **corrosion of character** (Sennett, 1998) because constantly shifting and precarious work conditions make it difficult for people to build a stable “life narrative” around which character is built.
4. Creating and Managing Work Identities
   1. “Crisis of identity” in modern working conditions intensified because organizations have a close link between employee identity and control.
   2. **Identity workers:** workers not only have to have certain skill-sets, they must incorporate the latest managerial discourse into their senses of self.
   3. Society has shifted from *ascribing* selves to *achieving* selves.
   4. Ascribed selves:
      1. Limited social mobility
      2. Often determined by class structure
      3. Provided a strong sense of stability and security
   5. Achieved selves:
      1. More fluid social selves
      2. Onus placed on the ability of the individual to carve out a stable, coherent identity
      3. Requires *identity work*, where we are constantly shaping our identities
      4. Social mobility
      5. Existential/ontological insecurity
   6. Identity, Identification, and Disidentification:
      1. Identity Work
         1. Identity is thoroughly social
         2. Identity is always contingent and ongoing
         3. Identity draws on various macro discourses that enable us to develop a self-identity that is meaningful and coherent
         4. Identity involves struggle
         5. Identity is a communication phenomenon
      2. Three processes in identity work:
         1. Managing identity: managing and negotiating identity
         2. Identification: developing different levels of identification with the organization
         3. Disidentification: developing different levels of separation from the organization
      3. *Conformist selves*: Organizational members portray themselves as valuable to those in authority by trying to appear indispensible to the organization.
         1. Desire greater job security by appearing “indispensible”
         2. View professional identities as ongoing projects that must be maintained and improved
         3. Ironic because the more instable the organization, the more commitment required for conformist selves to keep up their projects of making themselves indispensible
      4. *Dramaturgical selves:* Organizational members put on communicative performances that enable them to survive and prosper in a highly controlled workplace.
         1. Workers must outwardly demonstrate that they’ve conformed to the work environment (wearing the right costume/clothes, etc.)
         2. Can be used as a mode of resistance, where the worker has a sense of irony about the performance.
         3. High emphasis on public performance of work self, and can range from highly conformist to highly resistant (depending on one’s sense of a “true” or “cynical” performance)
      5. *Resistant selves:* Organizational members attempt to resist managerial control efforts.
         1. Engage with the symbol system that undergirds managerial power.
         2. Use cynicism, humor, & irony to subvert the dominant, official meanings of organizations/managers.
         3. Try to capitalize on the ambiguity available in organizational workplaces
         4. Demonstrate the extent to which people try to retain a separate self (outside of organizational control)
         5. Reveal the extent to which workers can self-consciously manager their identities in workplace culture, maintaining a degree of autonomy.
   7. No Collar, No Life
      1. The higher one works up the socioeconomic latter, the more consumed she is by work.
      2. Hochschild (1997) argues that work provides a sense of identity that home does not.
      3. **Time famine:** the sense of not having enough time – our identities are wrapped up in managing time (Hochschild, 1997)
5. Conclusion
   1. In the 21st century, we are defined by the work that we do.
   2. Relationship between work and identity can be volatile and lacking security.
   3. Florida (2003) argues that place, rather than organizations, is the new organizing feature of people’s lives.
   4. Choices are made not about particular organizations, but about the quality of the place where the organization is located (Florida, 2003).
      1. Technology
      2. Talent
      3. Tolerance
   5. Seems to indicate hope for urban areas where there is tolerance and diversity.