Movements in Organizational Communication Research

Current Issues and Future Directions

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Chapter 3

Organizing Power and Resistance

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This chapter explores the relationship between power and resistance in the context of work and organizations, with a particular focus on the communicative, discursive processes of power and resistance. We do this by examining some key research traditions in this area—traditions that encompass both Fordist and post-Fordist work contexts. Historically speaking, the Fordist organizational form emerged in the early twentieth century and was dominant until the late 1970s, while post-Fordist work arrangements began to emerge in the wake of the crisis of capitalism in the 1970s. Our goal in the chapter is to explore how, in the course of the various transformations of work and organization during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, there have been concomitant shifts in the nature of workplace struggle; that is, in the relationships between power, resistance, and organizing. As a particular economic mode of production, capitalism is incentivized to transform the labor process because, as Marx observed, the rate of profit tends to fall as markets become more competitive and saturated. As such, conceiving of new ways to intensify the labor process is one of the only ways to regain a competitive edge. Such transformations, however, always occur in an economic and political context of struggle, as workers inevitably push back against efforts to extract more and more surplus value from their labor. Power and resistance, then, are defining, constitutive dynamics of the labor process that take on particular features under capitalism. Indeed, as Boltanski and Chiapello (2002: 2) state, "Capitalism needs it enemies" in order to retain its dynamism. In this chapter, we delve into the changing nature of these features.

In some respects, we view this chapter as a frame through which the other chapters in this book can be read. Processes of power and resistance underpin, define, and constitute organizational communication; they are the medium and outcome of everyday organizing. Thus, organizational communication phenomena such as organizational identity and identification, culture, gender, difference, decision-making, emotion and relationships, and so forth are all inflected by the power and politics of everyday organizational life. As you read this collection, we encourage

you to think about how each of the topics covered might be read through the dialectical lens of power and resistance.

The chapter takes the following form. First, we provide brief narrative accounts of how we developed our particular research interests. Second, we explore research and new themes in the area of organizational power and resistance. Third, we develop a practical application of this research with data examples from a study of new public governance. Finally, we briefly discuss directions for future research.

Personal Reflections

Dennis' Narrative

I've been studying power and resistance for longer than I care to remember. My very first publication, coauthored with a fellow grad student, was written as a course paper for a philosophy seminar and, although it wasn't about organizational communication, it focused on the relationships between discourse, ideology, and power (Mumby and Spitzack 1983). The opening of that first publication (about the ideological effects of television news) stated: "Language plays a fundamental role in the structuring of experience. Social realities are constituted, sedimented, and reified for members of a community through discourse" (Mumby and Spitzack 1983: 162). More than 35(!) years later, I am still motivated by the relationship between discourse and human experience, although I'd like to think I've learned a few things in that time and am addressing it in more thoughtful ways.

The turn to studying organizations as a site of power and resistance came shortly after I wrote that first article. Work and organizations provided me with an interesting context in which to study the ways in which social actors collectively constructed social realities. At that time, the study of organizations as cultures was beginning to emerge, and I was frustrated that while this literature explored organizations as social constructions, there was little or no attention paid to the dynamics of political struggle in this social construction process. How people make sense of the world and create meanings is never politically innocent, but always emerges out of struggles between different stakeholder interests. My next few publications, then, both critiqued the political neutrality of the organizational culture movement, and built a case for taking more seriously the relationships among communication, power, and organization (Mumby 1988). For me, it was important to be part of the development of a critical tradition (drawing on neo-Marxist and post-structuralist theory) that developed the idea that not only were organizations constructed through communication processes, but that this construction process was both medium and outcome of power and politics.

Since those early days I've expanded my research agenda in order to (a) more fully comprehend the incredibly complex ways that communication, power, and organizing intersect; and (b) better account for the changing features of work and organization itself, exploring the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism with the emergence of neoliberal capitalism. I have written about: the intersection of gender, organizing, and power (Ashcraft and Mumby 2004); resistance practices and organizing (Mumby et al. 2017); humor, power, and organization (Mumby 2009); how we might better understand power as an endemic feature of everyday organization life (Mumby 2015); and, more recently, the role of branding in the emergence of new forms of "organizing beyond organization" (Mumby 2016). I've also published a textbook as a way of trying to bring all of these ideas to the classroom (Mumby 2013). In all of this research my goal has been to figure out how people go about individual and collective meaning-making in everyday organizing contexts that are not of their own making. How do people exercise agency in situations where their power is limited? What is the role of communication in mediating and constructing the struggle among different organizational stakeholders? How has communication played a pivotal role in the very shaping of capitalist relations of production?

Mie's Narrative

My very first exam at university was on Michel Foucault's (1979a) discussion of disciplinary power. As an undergraduate in educational psychology, this subject was overwhelming, and although I passed the examination I felt that my understanding was limited, which fueled further curiosity. As such, I struggled on with this in simultaneous confusion and comprehension, inspired by such quotations as the following:

> This form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to.
>
> (Foucault 1994: 331)

Puzzled by the power relations of discourse, subjectivity, and agency, it seemed the more I thought I knew, the more I also knew that I did not know. This resulted in theoretical and empirical explorations of post-structuralist developments in educational psychology about various educational issues (Davies 2006).

My interest in the management and organization of education started during my Master's and was cemented during my doctoral study about challenges of contradicting public governance discourses and the struggles over meaning and matter (Barad 2003) among actors in the education sector (Plotnikof 2015a). As I entered the field of management and organization, I was searching for critical theorizing that could help me untangle and destabilize the complex discursive-material constructions I found in my empirical data (Plotnikof and Zandee 2016). Hence, discovering the fields of organizational communication (Putnam and Mumby 2014) and discourse (Phillips and Oswick 2012) was a great relief, and they became my new "home." Ever since, Foucault and these related critical scholars have delightedly haunted and challenged my work.

Inspired by such, my work questions relations of power, discourse, subjectification, and organization—with a specific focus on normative dimensions, and on how subjects, practices, policies, and technologies are communicatively entangled, thereby co-constituting possible ways of doing, managing, and organizing work-life. Inherent in this is a curiosity about how communicative struggles and practices take the form of selves, others, and social ordering—and especially how this demarcates and (re)produces normativity. For instance, I have explored the communicatively constituted organizing of collaborative educational policy-making, thereby conceptualizing tensional meaning negotiations and resistance (Plotnikof 2015b). Also, I have investigated identity struggles of managers influenced by competing public governance discourses through concepts of subjectification and positioning (Plotnikof 2016b). Furthermore, I have critically discussed contradictions of hierarchy, marketization, and collaboration within neoliberal governance forms in education by theorizing their value-laden discursive practices and tensions (Plotnikof 2016a). As such, my work aims at developing critical accounts and complex understandings of managing and organizing in a discursive nexus of hierarchy, market competition, and collaboration—often within the education area. I do this by exploring the constitutive dynamics and effects of such neoliberal tendencies through organizational communication approaches.

Communicative struggles are still an interest of mine—as is the field of education. However, these days I am investigating the tensional relations of power/resistance and dis/organizing between dominating and marginal discourses in education policy. Both Dennis and I see the co-constitutive dynamics of dis/organization to be a central research topic to which organizational communication approaches can contribute. In addition to challenging the often-taken-for-granted foregrounding of organizational order as the primary and most optimal state of affairs, they can also expand knowledge about the correlations of dis/order, mis/managing, and dis/organizing of everyday life under various neoliberal governance forms (Mumby 2016, Putnam et al. 2016). A related aspect,

which we also explore in our work, is the norms of difference endemic in such dis/organizing processes and the gendering performativity and effects produced thereby (Ashcraft and Mumby 2004). To this end, we see organizational communication as a key field through which to enhance theorizing of the co-constitutive, re- or counterproductive, and politicizing effects of such norms of difference. This includes an interest in studying norm-critical practices of diversity management, and their construction of resistance to these norms, which relates to discussions of critical performativity across organizational communication and critical management studies (Parker 2001, 2016, Pullen et al. 2017). We view organizational communication studies as critical to further advancing these research areas.

Research Traditions in Studies of Power and Resistance

Research on organizational power and resistance is largely—though by no means exclusively—defined by the critical tradition in organizational communication and management studies, and it is that tradition that we focus on in this chapter. Historically, mainstream management and organization studies have eschewed the study of power and control because it flies in the face of long-held beliefs about organizations as rational sites of cooperation. As Burawoy (1979) has pointed out, however, mainstream management research is founded on the two rather paradoxical assumptions that organizations are (a) characterized by cooperative behavior oriented toward common goals, and (b) in need of mechanisms of control to maintain organizational goals. Where conflict is recognized (e.g. in the famous Hawthorne Studies of the 1920s–1930s) it is viewed as the result of idiosyncratic behaviors and psychological maladjustment of individual employees behaving emotionally rather than rationally. Multiple studies have shown, however, that the managerial view of "misbehavior" as aberrant overlooks the essential rationality of such "misbehavior" in contexts where following managerial and corporate goals is not in workers' best interests (e.g. working harder can result in pay cuts or layoffs due to overproduction). The critical tradition, then, sees worker responses to power and control as one half of a dialectic that has emerged from a system replete with asymmetries of power; where the power of capital far outweighs that of the average worker, and the interests behind those power asymmetries exist in contradiction.

The critical tradition takes its cue from Marx (1967), whose classic analysis of the capitalist mode of production exposed the material and structural contradictions at its heart. Marx's analysis of the capitalist labor process demystified how what appears as the "just equivalence" of exchange (workers freely selling their labor power to capitalists at the going market rate) obscures the exploitation of labor on which the sphere

of circulation and capital accumulation depends. Marx showed how the distinctive character of capitalism is the subordination of the human capacity to produce use values to the exploitive demands of the capitalist, whose concern is to create commodities that realize exchange value greater than the cost of production. In capitalism, then, exchange value is more important than use value (capitalists don't care what their factories make, as long as they make a profit). However, profit depends on the appropriation of surplus value from labor by paying it less than the value it adds to the labor process. As a result, capitalism is in a constant state of flux, with continual revolutionizing of production and constant redesign of the labor process to secure the extraction of surplus value.

Marx argued that workers are key to the process of surplus value extraction precisely because capital purchases not a fixed amount of labor, but labor power (i.e., the *potential* to labor for a particular time). As such, labor power is always indeterminate because it has flexibility and plasticity, embodied as it is in the figure of a live human being. Thus, conflict is an inherent part of capitalism because the employer cannot access the commodity purchased (labor power) without going through the embodied person of the worker. Under these circumstances, the capitalist needs to convert labor power to actual labor in as efficient a manner as possible. From a capitalist perspective, the most efficient way to achieve this is through a control imperative that enables the legal purchase of labor power to be converted into actual labor and hence surplus value. As we will see, there are numerous forms of control that capitalism enacts in order to intensify the labor process and hence maximize the production of surplus value, but precisely because work is embodied, workers tend to resist these efforts at control. Indeed, it is this problem of resistance (and the concomitant indeterminacy of labor) that management has been trying to solve in increasingly complex ways since the emergence of industrial capitalism (while increasingly trying to make it seem like they are not trying to control workers).

In the rest of the chapter, we examine the dialectic of power and resistance in the context of evolving forms of work within capitalism. In this sense, we follow Foucault's (1980: 95) well-known dictum that "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power." As capitalism has adapted to both economic and political challenges, the character of the power-resistance dialectic has also changed. As we hope to demonstrate, "struggle is not merely derivative but determinative of capitalism's development" (Burawoy 1985: 48).

Power as Coercion

One of the most direct and unvarnished ways in which the labor process is intensified is through forms of power that operate coercively. Much of

early capitalism adopted direct forms of control aimed simply at keeping workers at their tasks. This included use of punch clocks to dictate the beginning and end of the working day (adopted as early as the 1700s in the UK), company spies to identify trouble makers and union sympathizers (Henry Ford employed his own security service to surveil and attack union organizers) and, of course, various forms of technology. Indeed, the early twentieth century witnessed the introduction of both Taylorist scientific management principles and moving assembly line technology to both simplify and deskill work and limit workers' autonomy and ability to control the speed of work (Taylor 1911/1934). As Braverman (1974) showed in his famous analysis, Taylorism intensified the labor process through the development of a managerial monopoly over knowledge about work (previously the possession of skilled workers), using this monopoly to separate the conception of work from its execution. Hence, brain (management) and hand (workers) became not only divided under monopoly capitalism but hostile, as workers were reduced to deskilled appendages to the labor process and denied any autonomy. Taylorism, then, was less about increasing technical efficiency and more about wresting control of the labor process from workers and giving it to management. Moreover, Braverman argues, subsequent theories of management (e.g. human relations, human resource management, etc.) do not replace scientific management, but rather function to psychologically adjust workers to the new reality of Taylorized labor processes.

   The use of coercive control processes is both a medium and outcome of worker resistance to capitalist efforts to intensify the labor process. Taylor developed scientific management as a response to "systematic soldiering"—a deliberate and coordinated effort by workers to restrict output in the face of management efforts to speed up work (which often resulted in either reduction of workers' piece rates or laying off of workers). Moreover, despite these intensive control efforts (often aimed at the very body of the employee) workers continued to find ways to resist, for example, by sabotaging machines, "working to rule" (i.e. refusing to do overtime), and engaging in organized and "wildcat" strikes. Thus, Burawoy (1985: 41) suggests that,

> [r]ather than a separation of conception and execution, we find a separation of workers' conception and management's conception, of workers' knowledge and management's knowledge. The attempt to enforce Taylorism leads workers to recreate the unity of conception and execution, but in opposition to management rulings.

Of course, coercive forms of control have not disappeared in the 100 years or more since the introduction of Taylorism and the moving assembly line. Indeed, one might argue that today's workers are far more subject to surveillance than early or mid-twentieth-century workers, with

the advent of sophisticated software that tracks employees' every move. For example, Levy (2015) shows how truck driving—a profession whose members are traditionally fiercely independent and espouse the rhetoric of the "open road"—has become tightly controlled through a software-based "fleet management system." Under the old system of paper log books, truckers were able to subvert control efforts by completing log books in a post hoc manner. Under the new system, however, an electronic on-board recorder (EOBR) constantly collects real-time data that tells a central control system precisely where each trucker is at all times. As such, employers can largely eliminate trucker autonomy and "local knowledge."

An even more extreme example of coercive workplace surveillance is Amazon's close tracking of the movements of warehouse employees as they rush to fill orders. Amazon recently patented technology for a wristband worn by all warehouse workers. The wristbands "use ultrasonic tracking to identify the precise location of a worker's hands as they retrieve items. One of the patents outlines a haptic feedback system that would vibrate against the wearer's skin to point their hand in the right direction" (Solon 2018). Here, workers' movements are not only monitored but also dictated, thus reducing the amount of time spent locating items. Frederick Taylor would have been proud! Increasingly, then, and particularly for low-paid and contingent workers, electronic surveillance is the norm rather than the exception as companies seek to gain advantage over their competitors in speed and quality of service.

Power as Consent

While coercive forms of power are effective under certain circumstances and, indeed, dominated organizational life in the early twentieth century, in the last few decades organizations have increasingly moved toward consensual models of powers. As Willmott (1993) has pointed out, the goal here is not to control employee behavior, but rather to manage how they think and feel. Burawoy (1979) described this shift as one from "despotic" to "hegemonic" regimes, capturing the evolving efforts of capitalism to secure the production of surplus value. Indeed, critical organization studies research over the past 30 years has been devoted to understanding how these "hegemonic" forms of power shape everyday organizational life. Much of this research is rooted in neo-Marxism and critical theory, drawing on the works of Gramsci (1971), Althusser (1971), and Habermas (1984, 1987), among others, to examine how communication, power, and ideology intersect to construct organizational realities.

A consistent theme in this work is the focus on organizations as political sites of sense-making and meaning formation in which struggles over stakeholder interests occur. In this context, power is exercised not by

directly shaping organizational behavior, but by the ideological process of communicatively constructing systems of meaning that organization members internalize and enact "spontaneously." These ideological control systems have simultaneous "loose-tight" properties (Weick 1976); that is, employees are given the freedom to exercise considerable autonomy within an organizational value system that carefully circumscribes the range of options for such autonomy.

In many respects, the "corporate culture" movement of the 1980s (Peters and Waterman 1982) represented the apogee of efforts to ideologically construct the autonomous selves of employees in ways that served the corporate goals of productivity and profit. Thus, when corporations began speaking about the need for "strong cultures" in the early 1980s, they were really speaking about the need to capture workers "within a complex process of social engineering" (Willmott 1993: 522) such that every employee activity is consistent with and reproduces the carefully engineered value system of the corporation. Kunda, for example, explores how a high-tech company engages in "normative control" of employees by "controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts, and feelings that guide their actions" (Kunda 1992: 11). As such, workers are driven by internal commitment to corporate goals. Importantly, Kunda (1992) argues that the real object of control under the corporate culture movement is the employee's self; to be truly devoted to the corporation, the ideal employee sees little distinction between their own system of beliefs and values and those of the corporation.

In this sense, we might say that the exercising of power within the corporate culture management strategy is both top-down and bottom-up. That is, while corporations carefully and systematically indoctrinate employees with their corporate vision (e.g. through "culture boot camps"), employees also engage in forms of self-discipline whereby they might experience forms of anxiety, guilt, and shame if they view themselves as failing to live up to the standards of the corporate culture.

What are the possibilities for employee resistance within this apparently totalizing disciplinary process? While corporations envisioned a single, monolithic culture with which all employees identified, in practice such a vision often translated into multiple subcultures that adhered to greater or lesser degrees to the formal culture. As many studies have demonstrated, organizational employees have an almost infinite ability to appropriate hegemonic corporate meanings and rework them in oppositional ways. The corporate culture movement is rooted in managing meanings, and thus struggle and resistance also occur on the terrain of meaning; employees deploy irony, cynicism, joke-telling, and so forth as a way to undermine managerial efforts to shape a singular organizational reality (e.g. Collinson 1988, Fleming 2007, Fleming and Spicer 2002). For example, Collinson's (1988) well-known study of a shop-floor culture examines how blue-collar workers used humor as a form

of resistance to management's top-down efforts to introduce a new, more "friendly" workplace culture. Workers perceived the new "corporate culture" as an attempt to co-opt them and undermine their bargaining position within the organization. Thus, while power as consent is largely managed through the discursive construction of particular organizational realities, resistance to such power is also rooted in discourse as employees push back against managerial efforts to shape such realities, often performing a kind of "semiotic jujitsu" (Klein 2001) in which the discourse of management is used against itself to construct alternative readings and realities.

While many organizations still talk about their "culture," in many respects the very notion of a strong corporate culture as a specific managerial strategy has been assigned to the trash heap of history. This occurred for a couple of reasons. First, there was a good deal of backlash—from both employees and social commentators—about the "cult-like" character of many strong cultures that created claustrophobic work environments that stifled creativity and innovation. Second, and more significantly, the shift in the 1980s to a neoliberal political and economic philosophy fundamentally changed the relationship between the individual and work, the employee and the organization. As Fleming (2014: 878) put it,

> management ideology suddenly encourages the 'whole person' in the workplace, with individual difference, diversity and 'life' more generally becoming key organizational motifs... . [M]anagers ought to tap the pre-existing and unique social capabilities of employees, rather than attempt to hammer them into an identikit image of the firm.

While such a shift might be seen as an effort to develop a more "humane" workplace (Ross 2003), it actually reflects a significant transformation in the ways that power is exercised in organizational life. In the next section we examine power as "governmentality."

Power as Governmentality

We have given the first two forms of power relatively short shrift because we want to focus more extensively on "governmental" forms of power (Foucault 1979b, 2008). Governmentality is, we argue, the form of power that most effectively characterizes how organizing operates in twenty-first century neoliberal capitalism. Indeed, it represents a significant shift from earlier forms of power, radically transforming the relationships among work, self, and organization. While power through consent operated via a homogenizing logic in which all employees were (at least ideally) ideologically interpellated into the same organizational reality, governmental power operates according to a logic of differentiation; that is, "through

the organized proliferation of individual difference" (McNay 2009: 56). How does this make sense as an exercise of power? How does the proliferation of difference rather than sameness and conformity function as a form of power in contemporary organizing?

To understand this, we need to understand governmentality as the principal form of power within neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberalism as a political and economic philosophy has emerged in the last 30 years as a response to the classical liberalism exercised through Keynesian capitalism in the three decades following World War II. Rooted in a view of government as a mitigator of the worst excesses of capitalism, Keynesian capitalism sought to create a social democracy that provided security for its citizens through government programs such as social security, healthcare programs, stable, long-term employment (guaranteed through a social contract between workers and employers), and so forth. Neoliberalism, on the other hand, is driven by the fear of excessive state intervention, and thus is premised on minimizing the role of the state and allowing market principles to flourish across all spheres of life, including work, family, relationships, and education. At the center of this privileging of the market is the sovereign individual, defined as an entrepreneur of him- or herself. In this sense,

> [n]eoliberalism is . . . a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.
>
> (Harvey 2005: 2)

From a neoliberal perspective, society functions most effectively when individuals are free to engage in self-regulation and self-promotion, unencumbered by the state. In such a context, the only role of the state is to provide the conditions under which such a process of marketization can flourish. However, as a number of scholars have pointed out, these self-regulating abilities of individuals are carefully managed; they are "shaped and normalized in large part through the powers of expertise" (Miller and Rose 1990: 2). Thus, beginning in the 1980s, and consonant with the rise of neoliberal economic policies, a new political discourse developed in which employees were constructed as entrepreneurial individuals who sought to actualize themselves in all spheres of life, including work. Employees are increasingly viewed as in search of meaning, responsibility, and fulfillment in work itself, rather than as seeking emancipation from work viewed as simply a means to an end.

This new "problematization" of the self–work relationship (Miller and Rose 1990) is consistent with the neoliberal view of the market as providing the "grid of intelligibility" for all spheres of life. Under a system

of governmentality, individuals are encouraged to view themselves as "human capital" engaged in a permanent process of enterprise as the means to increase the value of that capital. In this sense, the market is extended "to the entire social body and to generalize it inside the whole social system that, normally, does not pass through or is not authorized by the market" (Foucault 2008: 248).

Important within this system of governmentality is the normalization of risk and insecurity. While under the classic liberalism of Keynesian economics the goal was to mitigate risk and provide security for citizens, under neoliberalism risk and insecurity are normalized as a necessary and constitutive feature of control; an actual instrument of governance through insecurity (Lorey 2015). As Lorey (2015: 11) argues, "In neoliberalism precarization becomes 'democratized.'" If precarity is the norm, then there is no longer a separation between free subjects (in the classic liberal sense of social actors free to pursue their own economic self-interest) and the precarious; those who are free are also precarious. Thus, for Lorey, the function of what she terms "governmental precarization" is to create subjects who accept precarity as the norm, an inevitable and necessary feature of self-governance within neoliberalism. Under post-Fordism and neoliberalism, then, risk is spread increasingly downward, marking a shift from "venture capital" under Fordism to "venture labor" under post-Fordism (Neff 2012). In this sense, the implicit separation of labor and capital under Fordism is eliminated under neoliberalism. Everyone is a venture capitalist, but of their own human capital.

Organization studies research has increasingly focused on how the ubiquity of the market as the grid of intelligibility has led to the "corporate capture" of all spheres of life within capital. While under previous regimes of control the primary locus of struggle was between capital and labor "at the point of production" (Burawoy 1979), today the primary locus of struggle is between capital and "life itself" (Fleming 2014). In this sense, the capitalist mode of production has escaped the factory walls (what Marx called the "hidden abode of production") to encompass all of society, such that we now effectively live in a "social factory" (Gill and Pratt 2008, Lazzarato 2004) within which all aspects of life create the potential for capitalist valorization. As Böhm and Land (2012) argue, capitalism is now characterized by a "new hidden abode" in which the social becomes economic, and the central question for critical analysts of work and organization becomes: How does the production of meaning and subjectivity intersect with the capitalist valorization process?

From an organizational communication perspective, communication is constitutive of economic value within neoliberal capitalism. As Lazzarato (2004: 190) has argued, "Contemporary capitalism does not first arrive with factories; these follow, if they follow at all. It arrives with words, signs, and images." Thus, the production of value within an employment

relationship is subordinated to the production and organization of subjects within social relations (Böhm and Land: 225).

The question of the communicative production of the (free) subject within neoliberalism is therefore increasingly central to understanding how organizing processes operate in twenty-first-century capitalism. A number of authors, including McRobbie (2016), Fleming (2014, 2017), Marwick (2013), Kuhn et al. (2017) and Mumby (2016, 2018), have explored this question, examining the communicative processes through which governmentality constructs social actors as human capital/enterprising subjects. In the following, we provide a brief empirical example of how such governmental processes can unfold. As indicated earlier, the "grid of intelligibility" of the market frames all domains, including the public sector. Thus, we examine one area of governmentality in the public governance of education.

New Public Governance as Neoliberal Capitalism: The Governmentality of Co-Creating Value

In this brief case study, we illustrate how the study of power and resistance has practical implications for understanding the unfolding of organizing at the level of everyday life, and how this shapes employee identity struggles. In particular, we focus on governmentality as an everyday, endemic form of power in contemporary organizing. We examine how employees must simultaneously negotiate discourses of empowerment and subjection as they operate as "free" subjects of neoliberal governmentality, even within the public sphere of education (a sphere traditionally seen as exempt from marketization discourses under classic liberalism).

New Public Governance (NPG) has emerged as a public management discourse highlighting the potential of networks, partnership, and collaborative governance arrangements to deal with so-called "wicked problems" and public innovation demands (Ansell and Torfing 2014, Osborne 2006). As such, it is often seen as a post–New Public Management (NPM) tendency; where NPM aims for competitive market incentives to improve public policy and services, NPG seeks to innovate and produce public value by means of stakeholder involvement and cross-sector collaboration. The expectations for such a collaborative form of governance to enable public innovation are great:

> As a means of 'doing more with less' . . . [it] brings together a range of stakeholders, variously from the public, for-profit and non-profit sectors as well as users and citizens themselves, in interactive arenas that facilitate the cross-fertilization of ideas, mutual and transformative learning and the development of joint ownership of new solutions.
> (Hartley et al. 2013: 828)

NPG thus relocates its economic locus for value production from market competition to cross-sector collaboration, relational contracts, and the co-creation of involved actors as human capital. In this way, NPG can be read as a neoliberal capitalist discourse and practice that produces power through a form of governmentality, which encourages stakeholders to realize the innovative potential of collaboration and co-create "more" value for fewer financial resources, such that 2 + 2 may become 5.

This form of governmentality works through motivating organizational members and stakeholders to offer themselves as collaborative resources—as human capital who participate in co-creating value, in the name of responding to "wicked problems," fiscal crises, and innovating public policy and services for the sake of our future society. Far from accomplishing a kind of win-win situation, however, critical organizational communication studies have shown how this form of governance is constituted in practice through discursive tensions between, for example, hierarchical, market, and collaborative power-resistance relations (Bergmann 2018, Hardy et al. 2005, Koschmann et al. 2012, Plotnikof 2015b, 2016a, 2016b). Moreover, critical scholars unpack how communicative processes of NPG organize work and structure collaborations in ways that create precarious subject effects on workers, insofar as they must always be available, knowledgeable, and recognizable as human capital for public value production.

To illustrate this point, we provide a data extract from a Danish case study of two local governments' education departments that initiated cross-sector collaborations to improve local education policy and services. In this case, the collaborations included public, private, and civil sectors (politicians, administrators, union representatives, education staff, children, and parents). Ethnographic methods included shadowing the public servants involved in facilitating these collaborative encounters. The public servants were key actors in the local production of NPG practices, particularly in the organization and motivation of selves and others as human capital to come together and co-create "more for less." Following, we see Stuart, Head of Department, and Marsha, a civil servant, both working in the education department, but from two different local governments:

Stuart: We, public managers and servants, used to translate between political and professional logics. Typically, education practice is quality managed in a written quality report presented to a political committee once a year. But now we hear the politicians requesting these collaborative encounters and their more authentic communication in meetings with educational stakeholders and citizens. And that means it removes me as a translating part in the chain of command. I rather become someone who is to assure that the collaboration occurs and

creates public value . . . Collaborative facilitation is really about orchestrating different kinds of processes, right? And being empowered to do that. You know, how can we initiate and frame meaningful collaborative encounters as part of our new role? As part of the public governance of, in our situation, the education area.

Marsha: At the moment we are discussing another cross-sector initiative, and I've been asked for a plan, so I'm figuring it out. You know, I've told my boss that if we do it collaboratively then we shouldn't decide it all yet, then we need to find the answers with the stakeholders—they are the drivers. But it's not easy, because the stakeholders are also a struggle to deal with, you know, so I also have to think of how to motivate them, both before and during the process. It's really frustrating, really, because I'm not sure what they will do and say, so assuring that the collaboration creates value is central. But it's also what makes it all worth it, you know, this is the challenging part, because here our knowledge and development of education matters. This is not just about numbers, budgets, strategy, this is where we can make a real difference, this is where all this actually can be of value to the kids . . . I really think it's assuring the best knowledge sharing and decision-making about the value of education, but it's sometimes necessary to be strategic, too. So, I also work a lot with traditional control-data for bench-marking and budgets, but to create space and arguments for the necessity of collaborating as well. But it is frustrating and confusing often. I feel like its two different logics and languages—sometimes I'm going mental—because I never know which one is the right one. I just have to be ready to respond accordingly and take the opportunity to show the potential of collaboration when it is an advantage—politically, financially, or educationally. So I strategize a lot. I need to always be ready to see these opportunities, but it is not easy.

In the first extract, Stuart explains how the turn to NPG has changed the role of managers and other civil servants from translators between policy and frontline practice to facilitators of collaboration between stakeholders in order to assure public value co-creation. Although this change removes him from a certain position in the chain of command, he chooses to discursively enact his new role as "empowered" to orchestrate collaborative governance processes, which he constructs by means of positively charged words such as "authentic communication" and "meaningful encounters."

In the second extract, Marsha uses different discursive practices to construct cross-sector collaboration positively as a process of "finding

answers together" with stakeholders, who are seen as "drivers." Like Stuart, she positions herself as a facilitator; however, in so doing, she not only constructs stakeholders as drivers but also as challenging to collaborate with, and thus she "struggles" and needs to "motivate" them. Even though she subjects herself to the ideal of NPG as collaborative innovation, her discursive self-positioning also includes frustrations regarding: (a) dealing with stakeholders, with making herself and others available as human capital and with assuring that this creates public value; and (b) the different operating logics, invoking tensions between NPM and NPG discourses. Marsha uses terms like "control," "budget," and "benchmarking" about the former, and "best knowledge sharing and decision-making" and "value of education" concerning the latter, thereby stressing this as the better of the two logics. Nevertheless, her positioning also emphasizes strategic use of the opposing discursive practices, depending on their legitimacy in different situations. Hence, as she subjects herself to collaborative governance forms as ideal, she also empowers herself to strategize between competing logics of NPG and NPM. In doing so, however, she struggles with constructing legitimacy— "responding accordingly"—and with constructing "opportunity" and "advantages" for enabling collaboration between different stakeholders as the human capital to co-create public value.

Key actors like Marsha are thus subjected to the performance of identity struggles invoked by discursive tensions between these competing logics. On the one hand, Marsha is constructing her professional identity through NPM discourse and related practices, for example, benchmarking; on the other hand, she is constantly stressing and pushing the NPG agenda to position herself and others as important human resources that co-create value. Two related issues can be emphasized here: First, such tensional struggle produces challenging subject positions for involved actors to perform identity work by negotiating opposing discursive logics. Second, the governmental power that is thereby produced seems to create "free" subjects, but they are only recognized as "free" by positioning themselves as human capital available for various forms of value production. This governmental power, then, may make subjects appear as "free," but affects them in problematic ways; that is, by producing "insecurity" that make them "go mental," hence making them and their work precarious accomplishments (which, of course, must be continually *re*accomplished on a daily basis).

In sum, NPG discourses and associated practices may express ideals of stakeholder-involvement in cross-sector collaboration as a "meaningful," "authentic," and "knowledge-sharing" way of appropriating local resources for innovating and co-creating value. Yet, the tension-filled governmental power relations of collaborative organizing, alongside other existing governance discourses (e.g. NPM), require key actors to position themselves and others as collaborative resources. As a result, people like Marsha experience ongoing identity struggles related to their

subject positions as human capital who are enjoined to contribute to value production under the neoliberal model of new public governance.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

In this chapter, we have tried to provide a sense of the evolving relationships between communication, power, resistance, and organizing. The evolution from coercive, to consensual, to governmental forms of power reflects increasingly sophisticated understandings on the part of capital and its agents of how the indeterminacy of labor power can be made more determinate. Moreover, each evolution relies on an increasingly complex conception of the employee as subject; that is, as both subject *to* control processes and as an autonomous subject who exercises agency and struggles against these control processes.

From an organizational communication perspective, one of the biggest challenges for future research is to create more nuanced understandings and critiques of the processes through which the scope of capital accumulation has been expanded under neoliberal capitalism. While under Fordist capitalism the creation of surplus value took place largely "at the point of production" (Burawoy 1979) in the factory setting (where the principal point of antagonism was between capital and labor), under neoliberal capitalism the production of economic value has escaped the boundaries of the formal organization to encompass life itself. The market "grid of intelligibility" encompasses all aspects of life, including the public sphere. Hence, the principal point of antagonism is no longer between capital and labor, but between capital and everyday life. Moreover, while the production of value under Fordism pivoted around the indeterminacy of labor power (and the efforts of capital to make it determinate), under neoliberalism the production of value now pivots around the indeterminacy of meaning; that is, how is capital able to capture the sense-making practices and identity work of actors' everyday life in ways that can be turned into human capital and monetized? If "life itself" is the new terrain of capital, what are the possibilities for resisting this expanded form of corporate capture? Recent essays (e.g. Ashcraft 2017, Gagnon and Collinson 2017, Wilhoit and Kisselburgh 2017) all speak to important efforts to study "life itself" beyond traditional work and organizational spaces and explore how forms of resistance are flourishing.

As critical scholars, we thus need to think in terms of more expansive conceptions of what counts as "organizational communication." We can no longer afford to conceive of organizations as specific sites of communicative organizing; we must broaden the scope of the field to include not only the study of the (communicative) production of organization, but also the communicative organization of (capitalist) production. Communication not only constitutes organization; it also constitutes capital.

Discussion Questions

1. The three forms of power are presented as historically succeeding one another, but to what degree is there evidence of all three forms of power (and resistance to them) in contemporary organizations?
2. Using the chapter's discussion of governmentality as a framework, identify how power operates in the "gig" economy. How are workers for companies such as Fiverr, Uber, and Airbnb (or identify a company of your own) subject to governmental forms of power?
3. To what extent do you agree with Boltanski and Chiapello's claim that "capitalism needs its enemies?" What does this tell us about the nature of capitalism?
4. From a critical perspective, what does it mean to say that the principal struggle in contemporary capitalism is between capital and labor? Historically, how have capitalist organizations managed this struggle? In contemporary work under neoliberalism, what does it mean to say that the principle struggle is now between capital and life rather than between capital and labor? Provide some examples of this capital–life struggle.

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