Book Reviews

THE ORGANIZING PROPERTY OF COMMUNICATION,
François Cooren, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins,
2000, xvi + 255 pp.

The literature on organizational communication is filled with
statements about the "socially constructed" nature of organiza-
tions. The idea that organizations depend on humans' meaningful
activities and interactions is, indeed, a truism. However, the vague-
ness of such statements often hides the fact that they might actually
rest on a wide variety of ontological assumptions and so bear very
different meanings.[1] Moreover, the field has witnessed very few
attempts to develop a conceptual apparatus that would explore the
specifics of the "construction" of organizations in communication
activities.

Even if only for its attempt to fill this gap, Cooren's book should
receive close attention from organizational and management com-
munication scholars. Here is a dense book putting forward a tenta-
tive model of some basic "properties" of speech communication on
which rests, according to the author, the constitution of organiza-
tion. Breaking from the idealism supporting most of the social con-
structionist claims that followed Berger and Luckmann's (1966)
book *The Social Construction of Reality*, Cooren makes a theoreti-
cal case for a constructionist view of organization based on a realist
and materialist ontology of language and organization. Organiza-
tion emerges from communication, in Cooren's view, not primarily
because people share a set of typifications or a common under-
standing of their intersubjective experiences, but because they
share an objective world, both discursive and material in nature.
This world of objects is external to themselves as individuals and
yet constructed by them. He sets himself the task to show that it is
through the necessary involvement of discursive objects in every
single communicative exchange that communication develops its

organizing effects. In an innovative and at times radical rethinking of traditional issues, Cooren proposes a perspective that brings language to the forefront of the analysis of both communication and organizing.

The book's thesis is developed into two parts. The first part presents, in three chapters, the sources of Cooren's intuition: Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1979, 1983, 1985, 1995) theories of speech acts (chapter 1); various critiques of speech act theory including Bourdieu's (1977, 1990, 1993) and Derrida's (1976, 1982, 1997) deconstruction of Searle's perspective (chapter 2); and, finally, Greimas's (1987, 1990) semiotic model of action and narrative, which Cooren intends to use as the starting point of his own model of speech acts.

The first two chapters lead the reader into a journey across the various philosophical issues and positions that nourished the debates over the conceptualization of speech acts. At the heart of this discussion lies the notion of intention and the part it should play in an account of the constitution of speech acts. From his intentionalist perspective, Searle (1979, 1983, 1985, 1995) treated the speaker's intention to accomplish a specific act as a constitutive part of the act itself. Following Derrida's (1976, 1982, 1997) critique, Cooren argues that the speaker's intention should be removed from an account of how speech acts function in the social world. A statement such as a promise, even if not intended as such, can still work somehow by itself as a promise, like a text whose action always overwhelms or surpasses its author's intent. Cooren contends that the very possibility of such cases is indicative of the extent to which the accomplishment and functioning of speech acts are independent of the subjective intention of the speaker.

Once he has discarded intention as the criterion for identifying an action, Cooren must develop a view of action that does not privilege the speaker/actor's perspective, but offers a way out of Searle's (1979, 1983, 1985, 1995) subjectivism. To do this, he borrows the French semiotician Greimas' (1987, 1990) theory of action, discussed in the third chapter. A crucial feature of Greimas' model for Cooren is that it defines action as the communication of objects that transforms the reality and the identity of the actors involved. Such

transformations are quite explicit in a number of speech acts, such as the baptism where a name and a religious identity are literally given to a baby; however, Cooren takes this transformation as the general case. His central notion is that this transformative quality is actually what makes any speech act an act in the first place. To give an order, in Cooren's analysis, is literally to produce a text that will ideally give the recipient the obligation to do something (a transfer of a "having to do" in Greimas's, 1987, 1990, jargon). In the same way, to authorize is to grant the recipient the ability to do something. To promote someone, again, is literally analyzed as the gift of a new organizational identity. Speech, then, inherently entails the creation and transfer of a variety of discursive objects on which rest the constitution of organizations. All these transformations are what make speech more than just descriptions of realities, but actions that shape our social and organizational worlds. The kind of transformation accomplished will vary according to the nature of the objects, but the transformative dimension of speech acts is what Cooren will take as their constitutive dimension and the basis of his own reconceptualization.

The second part of the book, titled "Toward a Model of the Organizing Property of Communication," develops Cooren's own perspective on speech acts based on this new standpoint. It is primarily devoted to a systematic presentation of his conception of the illocutionary dimension of speech acts and to an introduction of a new typology of objects involved in interactions and the kind of transformations they entail. Using his model, Cooren provides a closer look at the everyday communicative acts in organizational life like giving directives, permissions, information, and advice, as well as making promises or commitments. These are so pervasive and common in daily organizational life that they become transparent or invisible to the actors who regularly perform them. By putting them at the forefront of the analysis of organizational communication, Cooren shows how the function of language can hardly be dissociated from that of organization.

The last chapter addresses more explicitly the organizational dimensions and implications of the model. Maybe the most fascinating part is how Cooren's perspective highlights a basic dilemma

of organizational communication. In shifting the analyst's focus from the speaker's state of mind to the action of the text produced in communicative acts, Cooren insists that an action is always an act of "delegation." He suggests that we, as agents locked in the tiny limitations of our bodies, cannot but delegate to texts, tools, and/or people if we are to act on reality. When I promise to submit a book review, I actually delegate to the text "I will do it" the charge of doing *for me*, *somewhere else* (even if it's just a couple of feet away), the work of committing myself, while crossing my fingers that this text will actually do that, and not something else. We are always acting at a distance, so to speak.

But the notion of delegation raises the issue of control. How can we, at the same time, delegate texts and people to act on our behalf and make sure that they won't misrepresent and betray us? How is organizing possible if speech and action really work this way? Cooren answers that such control is achieved through the translation of action in discourse. Of the two "actors" involved in my example (me and my statement or text), any discourse will submit the action of one of them to that of the other, typically in translating such an event into "I committed myself to write a book review." Even if action works through delegation, the semantic of natural language and discourse will not represent it that way. In any account of what happened, one will be picked as "the actor" and the other participant in the process (here my statement) will become more or less invisible or, at best, treated as a mere intermediary. Skinner would say that he submitted his rats to his program of getting supportive data for behaviorist theory. If the rats could have talked, as Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) wisely noticed, they could as well have argued that they, in fact, submitted Skinner quite well to their program of getting as much food as they wanted! In organizations, as we all know, some narratives dominate, creating what Cooren calls a *structure of anticipation* and, as a result, some people's actions and voices are silenced. Not surprisingly then, when Cooren concludes his book by connecting his work to the current organizational communication literature, he finds himself in line with the contributions of Deetz (1991) on corporate colonization, Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) on leadership, or Eisenberg

(1984) on strategic ambiguity. Where these scholars see communication as the very nature of management and control, Cooren sees his investigation in speech acts as providing further theoretical support to this basic assumption. It is unfortunate that he explores these connections only very briefly in the last pages of the book.

Although it is first and foremost based on semiotics and speech act theory, Cooren's book addresses the very notion of organizational communication. From its actional worldview, it invites students of organizational communication into a truly original exploration of the way in which organizations are constructed in communicative acts in an analytical and rigorous way. In showing how speech acts function independently from the speaker's intention, he also implicitly provides for us a way out of the subjectivism still prevailing in most constructivist positions, a necessary step toward the resolution of the micro-macro and action-structure dualisms. Because it focuses on the daily speech acts of organizational life, the book should also intrigue practitioners and managers by providing them with an original view of what they do on a daily basis. Overall, the book will surely, as the texts it describes, act both on the fields of organizational and management communication.

NOTE

1. For a fine and critical analysis of the variety of constructionists' arguments and positions, see Collin (1997).

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First, Break All The Rules: What The World's Greatest Managers Do Differently, by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999, 272 pp., $25.00 (hardcover).

This meta-analytic 25-year study by the Gallup Organization looked at more than 1,000,000 employees and 80,000 managers

across 400 companies to ask the question, What do the world's greatest managers do differently? The answer potentially is found in Buckingham and Coffmann's book *First, Break All the Rules*. We say "potentially" because, even though this book is now a best seller, it would have been nice to see W. Charles Redding receiving these accolades and the field of communication receiving the recognition for saying the same things more than 25 years ago.

In short, the research suggests that "managers trump companies." The bond between the manager and the employee is more important than any other material benefits and reputation a company might provide, the authors conclude. In fact, the data suggest that an employee's relationship with the immediate manager determines how long the worker stays and how productive the worker is within the organization. The authors view talented employees as central to creating profits for any organization. In an age of knowledge workers, the value of corporations lies in the mind, body, and spirit of its workers. When people leave an organization, they take their value with them, often to the competition. Therefore, it is paramount for businesses of the new millennium to create work environments that attract and retain talented employees. Ultimately, the authors conclude, great managers are able to turn each employee's talent into business performance.

CONTENT

The book identifies the following four basic roles or most important responsibilities of a great manager:

- select a person (and know the differences among talent, skills, and knowledge),
- set expectations,
- motivate the person, and
- develop the person.

Great managers play these roles by unlocking the potential of each employee in four critical ways. First, managers select people for

their talent, not just their experience, intelligence, or determination. Talents are the patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior that drive actions. Second, managers set expectations by defining the right outcomes. They avoid telling employees the right steps to take to do their jobs. Rather, they allow individuals to apply their own creativity to situations to meet the desired results. Third, great managers focus on people's strengths, not their weaknesses. Focusing on strengths helps managers to release the potential that lies within each individual. Managing strengths allows each employee to "become more of who they already are." Finally, great managers help employees find the right fit within the organization, not simply the next step in the corporate hierarchy.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The authors (drawing on the extensive Gallup organization database) used what they called a *meta-analytic research method* that included qualitative and quantitative studies. The depth and scope of the project is unprecedented in studies of managers and what makes managers successful. The sheer volume of data that was collected and analyzed makes the results compelling. Indeed, the veracity contained in the data stimulated our thinking and served as a springboard for the thoughts in this review that seek to advance communication theory and practice within organizations.

Although the conclusions of the book are rich in detail and go against conventional wisdom in some cases, the authors come up short in several important areas. First, the authors do not go far enough to acknowledge the important role that communication plays in the relationship between manager and employee. For instance, Fred Jablin's extensive research on the superior-subordinate dyad as a key unit of analysis in organizational communication literature is unmentioned. We noted that the 12 key questions asked of managers were essentially the same set of questions found in what was once known as the ICA Communication Audit, in the

Communication Effectiveness subscale. Communication scholars and practitioners have used these instruments for many years. In addition, the importance of communication in negotiation, decision making, and conflict management is neglected. As William Ury (1999) writes in *Getting to Peace*, listening, respect, and creative problem solving are essential in today's world: "It takes guts to forgive and to apologize. It requires patience to listen and to search for agreement" (p. 199).

Second, the authors do not go far enough to acknowledge how important authentic communication and individual spirit are in the workplace. Discussions of spirituality, productivity, and communication are becoming popular for academic and general readers. Marianne Williamson (1992) writes that any deep and meaningful relationship involves supporting one another in becoming the best each individual can be. Equal partners "are meant to help each other access the highest parts within themselves" (p. 127). This form of spirituality is at the heart of authentic interpersonal and intrapersonal communication. Spirit is the wellspring of thoughts and actions. It taps into our deepest knowing of others and ourselves. The more deeply managers engage employees in spirit-filled dialogue at work, the more wisdom and compassion can arise to support the best performance in everyone within a company. Linking spirit, the workplace, and organizational communication, Mitroff and Denton (1999) have recently published *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*. They become the first researchers to offer hard, scientific data with regard to the effect of spirituality on the performance of organizations and executives at large. Mitroff and Denton's theme is that spirituality could be the "ultimate competitive advantage." Finally, communication is central to the Dalai Lama's (1999) thesis in *Ethics for the New Millennium*. He tells us that spirituality is "concerned with those qualities of the human spirit—such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony—which bring happiness to both self and others" (p. 22). We would hasten to add that it is the interconnectedness to all things in the universe that is at the core of spiritual thought.

TOWARD A 21ST CENTURY
LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR
GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS

This book views management and leadership as separate capacities. They are not. According to Buckingham and Coffmann, great managers look *inward*, and great leaders look *outward*. New thinking about leadership suggests that it encompass both inward and outward expression.

Organizations of the future must recognize that everyone within an organization is a leader. Traditional models of leadership assume that a leader articulates a vision and everyone else follows. Success or failure rests on the shoulders of the leader. Emerging models see leadership as a dynamic give and take. As Ronald Heifetz (1999) of Harvard University writes, "Leaders mobilize people to face problems, and communities make progress on problems because leaders challenge and help them do so" (p. 15). Leadership, then, is a process of shining a light on a particular issue, having others agree that the issue merits effort to improve, and then everyone works together toward the common goal. Success or failure rests on everyone's shoulders. The partnership model has replaced the executive-as-leader model. "In partnerships," according to Moxley (2000; see also Block, 1993), "spirit matters" (p. 101) so that leadership results from the interaction within a relationship and "the gifts, skills, and energies of all the people are used" (p. 101). Dialogue replaces discussion (Bohm, 1996), and conflict is held or resolved in a win-win way. In short, all of us have the capacity to be leaders. All of us have unique spirits with something of high value to contribute to our friends and families, our organizations, and the world. Managers can assume a leadership role by helping individual employees cultivate this uniqueness through dialogue so that the individual and the organization benefit. However, each partner is responsible for maintaining faith, hope, and spirit.

The main issue is that "if people want the freedom that partnership offers, the price of that freedom is to take personal responsibility for the success and failure of our unit and our community"

(Block, 1993, p.30). Once this occurs within an organization, true alignment of individual, manager, and organizational purpose(s) can be achieved. The dyadic relationship in *Break All the Rules* is a start in the right direction, but it falls short of what organizations must truly do and what communication scholars can contribute to this enterprise.

As we begin a new millennium, a tremendous opportunity exists for communication scholars to take a leadership role and shine light on the importance of communication to the formation of the great individual spirits who will move our organizations forward. This type of leadership from the communication field calls for a true interdisciplinary approach. Based on our own experience as consultants and best-sellers, such as *First, Break All the Rules*, the world is in dire need of models and practices that help people see communication as a process and more.

We must reach across our own insularity and find common ground with others in fields such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistics, and business. Some of our colleagues have done this quite well, but others have not. That is why this book review is a challenge to our discipline. Our discipline (with other disciplines) should be publishing best-sellers such as *First, Break All the Rules*. It is important that our knowledge not sit in our journals. We remember Bill Issacs commenting during his attendance at an International Communication Association conference in Albuquerque that he had been unaware of the annual meetings of our discipline. And Bob Eckles (1992), author of *Beyond the Hype*, in which he takes a rhetorical view, mentioned in a side conversation with one of the authors of this review that he was unaware of the existence of our field of study.

It is time for us in the field of communication to "break all the rules" ourselves, build relationships across disciplines, and begin to push back and push out our worldviews. We, as a discipline, can do this by maintaining an identity while changing form. This is, after all, how an organization and all living things learn, self-renew, and become more stable. In the end, this process can give us a greater sense of identity, and our field of communication needs that now more than ever.

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THE EMERGENT ORGANIZATION: COMMUNICATION AS ITS SITE AND SURFACE, James R. Taylor and Elizabeth J. Van Every, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000, 368 pp., $79.95 (hardcover), $39.95 (paperback).

In *The Emergent Organization: Communication as its Site and Surface*, Taylor and Van Every problematize and complicate our discipline's understanding of the relationship(s) between organization and communication. In their expansive and fecund volume, the authors, despite their explicit attention to the production of organization through communication, demonstrate that the organization-communication relation cannot be neatly characterized by root-metaphors of production, containment, or equivalence (Smith, 1993); rather, all three (and perhaps more) are, at once, necessary.

What is an organization? is the difficult question that Taylor and Van Every's *The Emergent Organization* attempts to answer by articulating an "authentically communicational theory" (p. xi); they take the notion of communication as constitutive of organization seriously. More specifically, the authors adopt a multilayered conception of communication as both a mode of exchange and a

mode of knowledge production. Through communication, the organization emerges in two ways: "as described, and thus an object about which people talk and have attitudes, and as realized, in its continued enactment in the interaction patterns of its members' exchanges" (p. 4). The organization is at once a lived, subsymbolic, conversational world or "site" and an interpreted, symbolic, text world or "surface." Indeed, the first section of the book (chapters 1 through 4) is devoted to a theory of communication that grounds organizational emergence in the intersection or cycle between conversation and text, with a theoretic focus on the nature of the organizational text. The conversational process of linguistic expression and organizational emergence is simultaneously the "talking out of a text" (p. 38), and Taylor and Van Every display a variety of textual structures that script and are displayed in discourse. One is the specific ditransitive grammatical form taken by sentences in which some agent (e.g., a higher authority) leads a source to give some modal object (e.g., authority) to a recipient, which is thereby recruited into agency, an "acting-for" relation that is the building block of organization. A second is Greimas' narrative form, which Taylor and Van Every develop as enacting a new sense of coorientation, of a transactional exchange wherein agency is granted and accepted, as twofold agency becomes a single organizational agency. After also recruiting speech act pragmatics and Chomskian minimalism to mediate their analysis of the text-world, Taylor and Van Every argue that textual forms are surface tokens where the relations constituting the organization, and their enactment and confirmation, can be read. The theme uniting the book's first part is the way linguistic structure enables and constrains the construction of social agency.

The second part of the book (chapters 5 through 9) articulates a theory of organization built on Bruno Latour's notion of mediation and on the sense of organization in the literatures on distributed cognition, group mind, and connectionism. Taylor and Van Every link the grammatical construction of agency to Latour's mediation or translation, the enlistment of other people, physical objects, and already-organized sets of people into a composite *actant* with its own emergent character and goals. Then they argue that mediation

occurring through conversation corresponds to the connections in a subsymbolic computational organization. Here, conversation serves to not only transmit but to develop and produce an "understanding" that belongs to the entire community of speakers as actant, but not to any one member. That understanding is, in fact, socially distributed in the relations between speakers, objects, and laminated or sedimented conversations called *texts*. In place of the agent who designs, interprets, and trains the computing system, the authors provide for *macroactors*, individuals who, supported by the ability to author agendas and maps of the organization, speak for a whole group or organization with moral authority derived from authentic representation of the collective knowledge. They argue that "it is in the translation of this shared (or distributed) knowledge through its voicing by some socially legitimated agent or spokesperson that creates the structuring of the community of work into what we usually think of as 'the organization' " (p. 32).

We regard this book as a major statement in the line of "conversation-text" theorizing initiated by Taylor at the beginning of the decade. As such, it has major virtues but, we believe, equally important limitations and flaws. Its first virtue, and one that lingers in readers' minds, is the cogent representation and insightful interpretation it gives to central texts and promising new sources for organizational communication. Taylor and Van Every's re-creation of the work of such authors as Deetz, Chomsky, and Weick, as well as their favored sources Greimas, Latour, and computationist literature, highlights novel and valuable twists in their work. For instance, the authors' metaphor of the "circle of lit terrain" created by a flashlight for Weick's "enacted environment" is illuminating (pun retrospectively noticed) in its avoidance of subjectivism. Such insights are rife in this book, as they are in conversations with its authors.

Perhaps one of the most exciting (but, as we note below, also dubitable) features of this text is that it provides us with an exciting new metaphor for thinking about how communication works to structure organizations, namely connectionism. Metaphorically, connectionism suggests that social knowledge goes beyond individual formulations. This metaphor, thankfully, explodes the oft

cited, introductory textbook refrain that "meanings aren't in words, meanings are in people" (e.g., Adler & Rodman, 2000). But, more importantly, the connectionism metaphor serves as a lens to more fully explore organizational difference. For several years, scholars influenced by postmodernism have suggested that meaning cannot be located or contained within specific terms or identities. Instead, they argue, meaning is located in the spaces *between* terms such as *male/female*, *public/private*, *mind/body* and others. Deconstructionists have attempted to demonstrate the interdependence of seemingly dichotomous terms and their meanings (e.g., Mumby & Putnam, 1992). Yet, all too often, these projects fail to adequately capture the interdependence of terms or entities and simply reverse binary oppositions to favor the historically marginalized term. Connectionism, articulated in theories of socially distributed cognition, in contrast, forces us to pay particular attention to the spaces and interactions between organizational members, objects, and texts where thickly connected meanings emerge. We should also mention that their specific synthesis of ideas about text, connectionism, and organization is rich and neat, and their exposition clarifies controversial ideas (e.g., nonhuman agency, and the text/conversation relation itself) in valuable ways.

We want to make clear that Taylor and Van Every develop important new insights about a crucially important topic. However, we do have some reservations about their theory. Most importantly, the authors fail to account for the role of power in their constitutive view of communication. Power in this text is glaringly present in its absence. Although they do pay passing lip service to critical theory in chapter 1, as it is articulated by the likes of Foucault, Derrida, Deetz, and later Giddens (chapter 5), their treatment of communication creates a largely rational, functional, and often consensual image of relation-constructing exchange. Anyone who has spent any time as an organizational member knows communication is often irrational, conflictual, and thus debatable in its outcomes, and always shot through with power.

Perhaps this omission is most glaring in their discussion of the macroactor. The macroactor speaks for the organization, represents it "by giving it voice and by interpreting back to it in symbolic form

what it collectively knows, at the subsymbolic level of cognition" (p. 141). The macroactor speaks with a "different, more authoritative voice," and has "been authorized to speak in [the organization's] name" (p. 160). Taylor and Van Every concede that the macroactor's power is not his or her own; rather, his or her power is a property of the network of those who have authorized the macroactor to speak on their behalf. The "power game" for the macroactor is "putting together an alliance of networked individuals" (p. 160). Such strategies, however, are merely what Frost (1987) terms "surface games" played between individuals and groups to gain and maintain context in organizations. What remains unstated is how ideologies or discursive formations come to promote or naturalize some (gendered, raced, classed) members as seemingly more able to speak for the others. The reader is left wondering how the macroactor is located in, moves through, reproduces, and perhaps resists the "mega game" of power (Frost, 1987, p. 532).

In a similar vein, Taylor and Van Every fail to adequately problematize the notion of voice. Their connectionist account suggests that a text or representation that captures public opinion or "gets it right," articulated by a macroactor, is accepted by a community or organization and, in fact, enables the collective to recognize itself as such. They do make clear that collective or distributed knowledge can never be definitively stated and thus any single voice may be challenged and open to multiple interpretations, but the presumption is left in favor of consensual, morally authorized macrointerpretations as functionally required for organization. This view flies in the face of findings concerning differentiation (Martin, 1992), subgoal formation (March & Simon, 1958), structural conflict of interests (Deetz, 1992) and resistance based on marginalized representations (Trethewey, 1999). It ignores the conflict, dissention, and contradictions that arise when one attempts (or is authorized) to speak for many. Organizational leaders who decide to downsize an organization, knowing that its quality of operations will be devastated, have not moral authority but the authority of capital. Perhaps hegemony-based control is another interpretation that can fit a connectionist model, but it is far from the one offered by Taylor and Van Every.

The authors' lack of attention to issues of power and conflict, we think, may be grounded in their often functionalist, rationalist, and monetarist treatment of communication. Although they do point to some very complex and interesting ways of conceiving of (organizational) communication, they too often slip into language that treats communication as an intentional tit-for-tat sort of process. These exchange transactions, they say, "are the stuff of narrative (as they are, of course, of organization as well)" (p. 48). This strikes us as inconsistent with the more complex metaphor of connectionism laid out in the later portions of the text and undermines a possible critical project.

The lack of attention to power is the single biggest flaw in the book, but there are several others deserving mention. First, what is really delivered is two books—a mediational model linked to a connectionist model. The connectionist model is based on the claim that a system's connections coevolve in a way that is not systematically rational or locally meaningful, whereas the sense in much of the book is that conversations, texts, and so on are laminating, creating mediations, and constructing the organization in a knowledgeable, meaningful way. The relations stated are suggestive, but not enough relations are drawn to show how to integrate the various conceptual schemes, and in the one extended example in chapter 9, the connectionist metaphor is almost completely dropped as the organization becomes simply a play of rival interpretations.

Two other problems deserve brief mention. One is an incongruity between the authors' explicit claim to give a "flatland" theory with only one, communication-process level of analysis, and the array of *collective actants*, macroactors, and complex systems of mediation involving multiple people and other agents actually introduced in the book. If relations and systems of mediation are real and perduring, they amount to one or more new levels of analysis. Second is the uncharacteristically demeaning reading given to Anthony Giddens' (1981) work. Taylor and Van Every criticize Giddens primarily for lacking Latour's concept of mediation, but they in turn ignore his mediational analysis of capital, cities, the clock, and so on in his most organizationally relevant work, published in 1981. Their theory could have profited from the attention

to time and space, as well as to power and large-scale social reality, that structuration theory provides (McPhee, 1985). But readers will profit from the effort and insight they will find in *The Emergent Organization*. We expect that this volume will have an enduring and provocative impact on our field.

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THE DISCIPLINE OF TEAMWORK: PARTICIPATION AND CONCERTIVE CONTROL, James R. Barker, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999, 256 pp., $66.00 (hardcover), $29.99 (paperback).

It seems that ever since the "economic scare" experienced by the U.S. industrial complex at the hands of the Japanese in the mid-to-late 1970s and early 1980s, corporate America has experimented with a variety of strategies to improve productivity. One example of such a strategy, combining both structural and human resource elements, is total quality management (TQM). In retrospectively articulating their versions of TQM, quality gurus such as Ishikawa (1985), Deming (1986), and Juran (1989) all emphasized worker participation and teaming as essential components of any serious quality effort. The current and "most popular" corporate foray into participation and teaming, as Jim Barker reminds his readers, takes the form of self-directed work teams.

In his book *The Discipline of Teamwork*, Barker explores the social consequences of this participation in self-directed work teams in general, as well as the generative discipline of teamwork in particular. His vehicle for this exploration is an ethnographic study of the attempts of one small manufacturing company, ISE Communications, to convert from a hierarchically structured organization to a system of self-directed work teams. Ultimately, he claims that this self-direction results in team members' development of a series of behavioral norms and some communal system for disciplining those who violate these norms. Barker then argues that to avoid the stress, emotional pain, and burnout that can result from this form of self-imposed peer control, organizations must create conditions that enable team members to reflect on and criticize their own behaviors.

Barker develops his argument in a well-written book that has application for a variety of audiences. Barker invites us into the world of ISE through his considerable talents as an ethnographer and storyteller. He weaves rich narrative accounts of various team members through his understandings of their lives and relevant material from related literature. The accessibility of the language and the popularity of his topic make Barker's book appropriate for

members of the academy as well as corporate stakeholders and practitioners, including team members, managers, and consultants. I highly recommend this book to both academic and serious-minded corporate readers. In the remainder of this brief review, I first provide an overview of the book's content, then discuss Barker's major conclusions, and finally offer a few thoughts for further consideration.

OVERVIEW OF CONTENT

In chapter 1, Barker introduces the reader to a variety of issues including his first exposure to ISE, a brief history of the company and description of its culture, a discussion of his agenda for this project, and an introduction to his methodological approach. The two latter topics lend themselves particularly well to pedagogical discussions of ethnographic involvements. Also in his initial chapter, Barker describes the general trend toward participative, team-based work in America. Barker then turns his attention in chapter 2 to the concepts of generative discipline and concertive control. He contends that workers control their own behavior concertively, which creates a workplace that can best be categorized as a *generative discipline*. This generative discipline arises from the team members' discursive practices as they pressure one another to behave in certain group-sanctioned ways. Barker sees concertive control as an "iron cage" more insidious and potentially more stressful than the rationality of bureaucratic rules.

In chapter 3, Barker describes, in a systematic yet interesting fashion, "the creation of a generative discipline of concertive control among ISE's teams, from its point of origin to its maturation as a clear and present mechanism for controlling work" (p. 168). He does a wonderful job of inviting the reader into the everyday experiences and discursive practices of ISE's team members. This chapter, more so than the others, brings the reader into the lived experience of ISE team members. His purpose is to identify the most clearly evident mechanisms of concertive control. Perhaps the most interesting observation is the labeling of the teams' formalization

of normative rules as the *eye of the norm*, a phrase Barker borrows from Lars Christensen.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 focus on how concertive control operates, as well as the social consequences that accompany this type of control. More specifically, in chapter 4, Barker claims that the team members "molded themselves into a community shaped around their shared values for doing good work on teams" (p. 168). Barker argues that in essence, team members created a substantive rationality (here he borrows from Weber) or "truth" for doing teamwork more powerful than traditional bureaucratic structures. Continuing with this theme of examining concertive control in operation, in chapter 5, Barker deals with issues of identity. He asserts that team members had reconstructed new individual identities in such a way that they fully invested themselves into their concertive discipline. They had given up much for the team, and communicated to new members joining their team strong expectations that newcomers would do the same. Finally, in chapter 6, Barker focuses on how the formation of a concertive discipline worked as a methodology for controlling team behaviors over time. Team members became intolerant of any deviance from their methodology for doing work and employed peer pressure both in private and public as their enforcement device.

CONCLUSIONS

I separate chapter 7 from the rest of my discussion with regard to content because, in this chapter, Barker presents his major conclusions with regard to the consequences of concertive control, as well as his program for responding to these consequences. According to Barker, the four most significant consequences of concertive control are (a)the powerful, useful truth, (b) the ever-increasing formalization, (c) the price of identification, and (d) the peer-pressured eye of the norm. Examined as a whole, these four consequences can be summarized in fairly straightforward terms. Associated with their participation in teams, members create and employ powerful community-based truths with regard to their work performance. Fur-

thermore, with these truths acting as incontrovertible value guidelines, members create an ever-increasing formalization of communal rules that operate more effectively than Weber's hierarchical bureaucracy for controlling and, when necessary, disciplining deviants. To discipline themselves, team members use peer pressure and the communal-rational authority of the team, being in the eye of the norm, generatively and punitively.

Their strong identification with the team, however, extracts a heavy price. Among other costs, members suffer the stress and burnout that accompanies constant self-supervision. At times, team members ignore their family and social lives putting team goals, expectations, and needs before all else. They may even live in constant fear of letting the team down. In his final pages, Barker suggests ways of responding to these potential consequences and costs. He urges organizations and teams to adopt a communicative approach that would enable teams to maintain not only their integrity, but also their individual and collective sense of what is and is not good for them as individuals and as a team. He calls for organizations to cultivate a continuing ability for teams to critique their own actions. Barker emphasizes that to do this effectively, management must support teams by first providing them with the "time and space required for them to pause and reflect on their own moral reasoning" (p. 179). He concludes by providing the reader with his vision of what "cultivating a continuing criticism" entails. He quickly sets forth a five-part model that includes creating a safe environment and learning collaborative communication. His model underscores the importance of language.

THOUGHTS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Jim Barker has written a book that makes us pause and consider what it is that ISE asked of its employees by requiring them to participate in self-directed work teams. My only significant concern with this book is the ease with which Barker generalizes about teamwork based on his understandings of a single ethnographic project. I wonder if, at some level, he is violating one of the princi-

ples on which ethnographic research is grounded—ethnography accesses local, situated, tentative knowledge. Does ISE reflect the norm by which we can evaluate and infer conclusions about all self-directed work teams? Having said that, however, I do not substantively disagree with the majority of his understandings (he has produced a solid audit trail), nor do I disagree with his request for a more self-reflexive, communicative approach to the team process. I would, however, pose a few questions for Barker and all of those who choose to read his book.

How does the nature of a team's work influence the effect of the "eye of the norm?" ISE's team members, it seems, work in close physical proximity to one another. In addition, from Barker's description, the work at ISE appears to be fairly mundane and repetitive, almost assembly line in nature. Would a virtual team or a team whose members are geographically separated experience the same pressures from the eye of the norm? Would a team with more creative control experience the same or similar rigid generative discipline? I also would ask the reader to consider (and Barker to address) how the broader social and economic context might have affected the functioning of ISE's self-directed work teams at the time of his study. Barker devotes little or no consideration, for example, to important economic and social issues such as alternative employment opportunities. In today's climate of full employment, would team members react differently to the workplace demands of ISE?

Finally, I would suggest to Barker that his call for reflective critical thinking in many ways resembles a vigilant interaction (see Gouran & Hirokawa, 1983, 1988; Hirokawa & Rost, 1992) functional approach to group decision making. For example, one of the four core issues of vigilant interaction theory asks group/team members to examine if there is something about the current state of affairs that requires improvement or change. Could not that same vigilant approach be applied to the process of teamwork as well as the content of decision making? In fact, in my experience, both inside organizations and reading popular organizational literature (see Bennis & Mische, 1995; Bolman & Deal, 1997), many organizational practitioners already are engaging in or at least suggesting much of what vigilant interaction theory and Barker put on the

table. For example, Bennis and Mische (1995) tell us that those selected for self-directed work teams must be formally removed from many of their daily responsibilities for training as well as ongoing education and that a proper (open and supportive) environment must be created. Many organizations and teams, I believe, have taken steps to ensure a positive system of discipline, which leads me to one last consideration. Could ISE simply have supplied insufficient training and/or ongoing support for their teams, thereby exacerbating the effects of the eye of the norm? Have efforts to install systems of self-directed work teams significantly improved in the past decade beyond what ISE employees experienced? Whether they have or not, Professor Barker's suggestions for cultivating a continuing criticism would help any organization in its efforts to accomplish such a move.

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