**CHAPTER 8**

**THE POSTMODERN WORKPLACE: TEAMS, EMOTIONS, AND NO-COLLAR WORK**

1. Introduction
   1. Shift away from “old” modernist models of organizing & production.
   2. The **precariat:** the new position of the worker in a precarious postmodern economy & work arrangements.
2. Disciplinary Power and the Postmodern Organization
   1. Michel Foucault characterizes power as “productive,” meaning that power *produces* subjects in everyday acts.
   2. **Disciplinary power** is how Foucault explains the *function* of power’s work to produce subjects – daily acts discipline us into certain kinds of subjects, shaping actions, discourse, ideas, and preventing conflict.
   3. Links discourse, power, identity, and institutions, all of which are necessary for our look at postmodern organizations.
3. The Postmodern Organization: From Fordism to Post-Fordism
   1. Fordist organizations/Fordism is a *modern* organizational form – *postmodern* forms are contrasted against these features of Fordist organizations:
      1. Highly bureaucratic organizational structure
      2. Highly differentiated labor process
      3. Large economies of scale
      4. Standardization of products
      5. Stable, lifetime employment
      6. Transfer of Fordist principles to society as a whole
   2. Post-Fordist organizations are *postmodern* forms of organization, which began to emerge in the late 1980’s in relationship to various culture/economic factors. In them, we see the development of:
      1. More flexible organizational structures
      2. A “de-differentiated” labor process
      3. Limited production runs and “niche” markets
      4. Increased commodification of everyday life and the creation of products as lifestyles
      5. Increasingly unstable, insecure employment
      6. A blurring of the distinctions between “work” and “home”
4. The Post-Fordist Organization: Teams, Emotions, and No-Collar Work
   1. Teams at Work
      1. **Work teams** are small groups of workers who are interdependent, mutually responsible, and considered a “social entity” within a larger system.
      2. Seen as *ideal* decision-making structure in post-Fordist orgs because they enable flexibility, adaptability, and innovation (and are decentralized). Some *managerial* benefits to teams:
         1. Worker empowerment
         2. Holistic synergy (like in Systems Theory – Chapter 5)
         3. Higher-quality decisions (pooling talent)
         4. Functional autonomy (concertive control, limited oversight)
         5. Increased commitment to organizational goals
         6. Increased productivity
   2. *Critiquing* work teams:
      1. Team work can be stressful and dissatisfying, rife with power-plays (Sinclair, 1992).
      2. Team work can cause tightened control and increased stress because of the pressure to perform during every second of work (Graham, 1993).
      3. Significantly increased concertive control, upping the amount of control, scrutiny, and surveillance that exists under larger bureaucratic structures (Barker, 1993).
      4. Teams often fail because they’re imposed on workers from above under the guise of “empowering” workers or making work more “participatory.”
   3. Emotions at Work
      1. **Emotional labor** (see also Chapter 3 & 7) is Hochschild’s (1983) term to describe situations in which employees must express certain emotions according to the emotional display rules of the organization.
      2. **Emotional labor** lets us see how emotions can be used *instrumentally* by organizations, as a mechanism of control.
      3. New workplaces claim a “culture of fun” or a “just be yourself” culture (Fleming, 2009), but there are often (unspoken) rules about *how* to have fun or just *how much* of themselves workers can be.
      4. Language/metaphors connect to emotions: holding “auditions” for jobs at Cold Stone Creamery, for instance, instead of “interviews.”
   4. “No-Collar” Work
      1. Fordist organizations were pretty stable, and work was organized around “collar color”:
         1. Blue-collar – generally worked with hands and paid by the hour
         2. White-collar – generally professional class of salaried workers
         3. Pink-collar – generally female support staff, doing clerical work
      2. **No-collar workers** are the product of post-Fordist, knowledge-based economies, distinct from the bureaucratic image of professional “white collar” work.
         1. No-collar workers have a more **nonconformist** relationship to work and management.
         2. No-collar workers approach work as a **vehicle for creativity** rather than lifetime, stable employment for a salary.
         3. No-collar workplaces also tend to be **flat, with decentralized decision-making**, with foggy boundaries between work and the rest of life.
         4. No-collar workers are **symbol manipulators** (Reich, 1991) **–** they make symbols rather than objects (for example, they make advertisements for toothpaste, *not* toothpaste).
      3. Possibilities of no-collar work:
         1. Potentially enriching because workers can realize their creative potential.
         2. Uses *skills* (is not “deskilled”).
         3. Thrives in work environments that are nonhierarchal, giving employees more freedom to work on their own.
      4. Constraints of no-collar work:
         1. Relies on precarity and instability of the post-Fordist work environment.
         2. Reflects a decline in the mutual contract between employees and employers.
         3. Ideas of precarity and scarcity have spread to nearly every sector.
         4. Precarity threatens workers’ sense of identity, because work is unstable.
         5. Threatens communities because workers have to move more frequently to find work and as such, cannot put down roots – decreasing social engagement.
5. Conclusion
   1. Postmodernism has profoundly shaped the ways in which organizations, as communication systems, function.
   2. Provides possibilities, but also looms with the threat of corporate colonization of non-work elements of life.