'Resistance, gender and Bourdieu's notion of field'

Dr Penny Dick
Sheffield University Management School

Abstract
Recent conceptualisations of resistance have tended to privilege intentional and conscious acts of resistance, as well as forms of resistance that are manifested within relations of power that are defined as asymmetrical from the researcher’s perspective; typically, the labour-management relation. In this paper, I argue that these tendencies can lead us to overlook forms of resistance that are manifest in other relations of power that exist in organisations, as well as to set ourselves up as arbitrators of what is to be considered “effective” resistance. Taking two contradictory accounts of sex discrimination in police work, I use Bourdieu’s concepts of field and habitus to explore how these accounts illustrate struggles within the field of organisations to define what counts as legitimate cultural capital. In essence, therefore, I present a “double-take” on resistance. At an abstract, theoretical level, it can be understood as an automatic product of field dynamics, generated as individuals and groups jockey for position, attempting to establish or challenge the worth of the species of symbolic capital that characterises the field. At a more empirical level, it can be understood as a refusal of, or challenge to, dominant ideas that exist to enable people to “make sense” of the dominant order. Both readings are critical, I will suggest, for a full appreciation of resistance.

Biography
Penny is a senior lecturer in Organisational Behaviour at Sheffield University Management School. Her research interests include identity, resistance and power; and the management and experience of family-friendly working practices. Her research is underpinned by a commitment to critical approaches, utilising primarily social constructionist theories and methodologies. She recently completed a two-year ESRC project on the management of part-time working in the UK police service.

Wednesday May 2nd 2007, 4.00pm
Room 4.02 Harold Hankins
Tea and coffee served from 3.45pm

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