



*Power and Interdependence  
in Organizations*

Power is an inescapable feature of human existence. It plays a role in all social contexts and is particularly important in the functioning of organizations and work groups. Organizational researchers have certainly recognized the importance of power but have traditionally focused on its negative aspects. Yet power can also have very positive effects. *Power and Interdependence in Organizations* capitalizes on significant developments in social science over the past twenty years to show how managers and employees can manage power in order to make it a constructive force in organizations. Written by a team of international academics, the book explores both the positive and negative aspects of power, identifying opportunities and threats. It shows that harnessing the positive aspects of power, as well as controlling its more destructive effects, has the potential to revolutionize the way that organizations function, making them both more humane and productive.

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# Power and Interdependence in Organizations

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*To my lovely son, Alexander, who empowers me.*

BW

*To my wonderful sons and daughters, Jason, Wesley, Lena and Colleen: They grow and stay united.*

DT

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## Foreword

Mark Twain made a very simple observation to do with leaders and power in life generally, “keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can somehow become great.” As the Editors of this outstanding and timely volume indicate, leadership and power permeate all aspects of our life, both inside and outside of organizations. From an organizational behavior and behavioral science point of view, we need to better understand the nature of this power and its interdependence with other aspects of organizational life. In terms of the latter, James MacGregor Burns (2003: 240) suggested in his book *Transforming Leadership*, for example, that “transforming change flows not from the work of the great man who single-handedly makes history but from the collective achievement of a great people.”

Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s the literature was replete with leadership studies, the 1980s and 1990s saw a slight decline in popularity in this subject, as other related subjects took hold (i.e. TQM [total quality management]). But with a different global business scene today involving the emergence of India, China, Russia, and other formerly underdeveloped countries, with differing political traditions and systems in a multimedia age, the issues of leadership, power and “leading with others” has come to “front of stage” once again. And although we have an academic tradition of understanding leadership in the context of the last half of the twentieth century, we have never fully understood the concept of power in the context of the twenty-first century and beyond (Burke and Cooper 2006). This volume brings together some of the world’s leading thinkers to explore various aspects of power, participative leadership, exchange dynamics, influence models, and the concept of “leading with values,” in a way that highlights not only the current literature and reflections of the thought leaders in the field but also the implications for the future of organizational development.

We feel that this book makes an enormous contribution to the literature in the field, to help us understand where we are, where we are likely to go and the implications of these reflections on how we should get to where we might want to go to achieve organizational and individual objectives. The Editors ought to be congratulated on putting together a coherent, innovative, and scholarly volume of distinguished international scholars. We hope that this book will stimulate debate on issues of grave significance to all of us working in and with organizations over the next decades. Without the uninhibited reflections on these issues prevalent in this book, the old adage would apply “if you always do what you always did – you’ll always get what you always got!”

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