Locating possibilities for control and resistance in a self-help program.

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Abstract:

This paper studies attempts to regulate employees' identities through self-help programs to examine control and resistance. Extant research shows how identity regulation secures organization control Less attention is paid to resistance of such control. This study addresses this limitation by examining one self-help change program, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, during implementation in a knowledge-intensive organization. The analysis highlights how (1) the implementation of "universal" organizational and personal change programs must be made concrete for particular organizations and people, (2) self-help programs provide various and often unintended avenues for control and resistance because of the universal-local translation, and (3) analyses of control and resistance must be conducted across organizational boundaries.
Keywords: Ambiguity; Control: Identity; Resistance; Self-Help

Article:

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"Self-help" books, magazines, training seminars, videos, and television programs are a ubiquitous part of American culture. Conveying a common theme, these self-help texts communicate a message designed to encourage individuals to engage in systematic self-management (Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005). Purveyors of this message have focused on improving aspects of our home, romantic, social, and organizational lives. Of concern for critical communication scholars, self-help takes a distinctly rational, managerial approach to the improvement of life (Hancock & Tyler, 2004; Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). As Tracy and Trethewey put it, "The self is the subject of numerous advice books or self-help guides, and therefore, identity is increasingly constituted by public, profit-driven, and institutionalized discourses" (p. 173). It is important, then, to study how individuals and groups engage, adopt, and resist these attempts to shape identities and, thus, control decision-making. While some scholars argue that self-help discourse contributes to the ongoing managerial colonization of the everyday life world (Deetz & Mumby, 1990; Hancock & Tyler), scholars have not yet taken seriously the possibilities for resistance rooted in self-help texts and programs.

This study engages one popular example of the self-help genre to explore the ramifications of self-management as a resource for both organizational control and resistance. In doing so, we treat control and resistance as a dialectic (Mumby, 1997, 2005) that must be studied together, simultaneously. Therefore, this research investigates how organization members engage a self-help program, how that program functions to regulate identity, and how that program reinforces or undermines organizational control. For scholars in organizational communication, this study contributes to our understanding of identity, control, and resistance by providing insight into the opportunities for both control and resistance built into the translation between self-help discourse and identity.

Uncovering Resistance

Answering calls to treat resistance as an ever-present counterpoint to control (Giddens, 1984; Mumby, 1997, 2005), organizational communication scholars since the early 1990s have engaged in empirical examinations of resistance (Ashcraft & Pacanowsky, 1996; Clair, 1994; Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Larson & Tompkins, 2005; Tracy, 2000; Trethewey, 1997). From these detailed case studies, scholars have uncovered patterns of control and resistance that emerge in specific contexts that inform our theoretical understanding of resistance and its

relationship to control. In general, this research has positioned resistance as dialectical, discursive, and linked closely with identity. The following sections seek first to theorize the nature of resistance in modern organizations, then to engage some of the controversies surrounding our conceptualizations of resistance, and finally, to position the self-help movement as consequential for scholarship on control and resistance.

The Contested Nature of Resistance

Traditionally, critical scholars of organizational communication emphasize domination at the expense of resistance (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Jermier, 1998). An emphasis on domination often masks the agency of humans as they experience contemporary life, inhibiting responses that might effectively fight domination. Recent scholarship has shown control and resistance to be mutually constitutive, rather than existing in an either/or relation (Ashcraft & Mumby; Collinson, 1994; Ott & Herman, 2003). In his reconsideration of hegemony, Mumby (1997) writes:

Hegemony is more appropriately conceptualized as a continuum ranging from the total integration of worldviews into a single, all encompassing ideology ... to situations in which there is widespread resistance and a plurality of voices competing for pre-eminence. (p. 364)

Thus, Mumby argues, the widely accepted perception within critical communication studies of hegemony as ideological domination achieved through consent should rather be understood as a dialectic between control and resistance. Further, attempts to control may simultaneously represent opportunities for resistance (Collinson; Mumby, 1997, 2005). For example, even as Fleming and Spicer (2003) argue that cynicism may actually reproduce power structures, they also acknowledge the need to investigate resistance empirically "to discern whether cynicism helps or hinders other modalities of resistance" (p. 171). Finally, in the words of Collinson,

Resistance and consent are rarely polarized extremes on a continuum of possible worker discursive practices. Rather, they are usually inextricably and simultaneously linked, often in contradictory ways within particular organizational cultures, discourses and practices.
Resistance frequently contains elements of consent and consent often incorporates aspects of resistance. (p. 29)

Understandings of resistance are further complicated by conceptualizing the nature of resistance as discursive, either as spoken or written text or as structure (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). Generally speaking, at both levels, communication plays a central role in analyzing relations among power, control, and resistance (Mumby, 1997, 2005; Townsley & Geist, 2000). Within the critical communication tradition, communication is broadly conceived of as constructing social reality. The created reality (1) typically privileges some people and interests over others and (2) may become naturalized, or taken for granted, over time, solidifying the disparity among people and interests. People live within this naturalized reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Conceptualizing control and resistance as discursive text and structure brings meaning and identity to the fore. Most recent studies of resistance have defined resistance "in terms of an individual's ability to articulate alternative meanings to that of the dominant constructions" (Ganesh, Zoller, & Cheney, 2005, p. 6). From this perspective, although there are dominant discourses such as race (Ashcraft & Allen, 2003), gender (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Clair, 1994), and class (Cloud, 2001), many discourses compete to define the modern worker (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996). The multiple discourses that shape the modern worker have led to a conceptualization of modern workplace identities as highly fragmented (Deetz & Mumby, 1990) or, alternatively, as "crystallized" (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). A crystallized conceptualization of identity suggests that rather than real or fake identities, the "self is multi-dimensional" (p. 186). On the other hand, despite, or perhaps because of, the highly fractured nature of identities, organizations try to shape identities in particular ways to produce the "appropriate individual" (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 619). As a result, the multifaceted identity of the worker then becomes a key site in which control is contested.

Evidence of a shift in control practices to identity-specific, meaning-based systems is well documented. Whether characterized as "concertive" (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985), "normative" (Kunda, 1992), or "self-

surveillance" (Deetz, 1998), scholarship in organizational communication since the cultural turn in the 1980s has focused on meaning and ideology as significant in shaping the identities of both workers and managers. These current means of control differ significantly from previous forms of control (see Edwards, 1979) in that control is exercised by getting people to accept certain ideologies or to identify with certain organizationally sanctioned value premises (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). Though these types of control systems have been well documented, resistance toward these meaning-based control systems is less understood.

Engaging Controversies of Resistance

Whereas the previous section details resistance as dialectic, discursive, and identity based, this section discusses some shortcomings and controversies in the resistance literature. This paper addresses two important issues related to resistance: the individual and collective nature of resistance and the metaphor of organization as a container. One key controversy in the resistance literature is how to account for resistance as individual and collective. The critical, discourse-centered perspective described previously has been criticized by those who claim that a discursive, meaning-centered approach diminishes the collective ability of organized labor to achieve concrete material gains (Cloud, 1998, 2001, 2005) and that a focus on the individual has caused scholars to ignore important collective social movements that have arisen to challenge global capitalism (Ganesh et al., 2005). Each of these critiques accurately suggests that when scholars focus on resistance at the level of individual identity, important opportunities for collective and potentially transformational resistance may be overlooked. On the other hand, in the context of high-tech, knowledge-intensive organizations, such as the one studied in this research, individual identity may still be the key point of contestation for control and resistance efforts. "Knowledge-intensive" organizations differ from traditional manufacturing and manual service organizations in that they "rely primarily on individual and collective forms of intellectual capital" (Deetz, 1998, p. 155). In these organizations, such as software development companies or aerospace engineering firms, the control methods used to manage employees tend to differ from those used in more industrial occupations. Studies of such organizations (Alvesson, 2001; Deetz, 1998; Kunda, 1992; Larson & Tompkins, 2005) suggest that control efforts are directed toward shaping identities. Thus, the identity of the individual becomes an important site for resistance. This study explores the nature of resistance as individual and collective in the context of one knowledge-intensive workplace.

Another significant shortcoming of the resistance literature is that it largely studies and conceives of resistance within the container metaphor of the organization (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). With a few notable exceptions (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Trethewey, 1997), the control and resistance literature has not adequately linked micropractices to larger structural dimensions such as class, race, and patriarchy (Mumby, 1997). In addition, though scholars have argued that macrodiscourses, such as managerial capitalism (Deetz & Mumby, 1990; Nadesan, 1999), play a significant part in understanding control/resistance, few studies have linked these larger discourses to actual micropractices. In fact, much of the research on resistance can be critiqued for focusing too heavily on micropractice while ignoring larger discourses and events (Ganesh et al., 2005).

This study addresses this limitation by examining control and resistance across porous organizational boundaries at the intersection of a macrodiscourse and organizational micropractice. Specifically, we examine the moment of encounter of a popular self-help program as it is experienced by organization members. In doing so, we bring two related literatures together, the control and resistance literature and the growing literature, largely outside of communication studies, on self-help and management gurus. At this point, then, it is important to position the self-help movement as salient to our understanding of identity, control, and resistance; we do so in the next section.

The Self-Help Movement as Control: Polysemy, Ambiguity, and Resistance

In organizational contexts, scholars have framed the self-help movement in other terms such as "enterprise discourse" (du Gay, 1996) or "professional branding" (Lair et al., 2005). Regardless of moniker, one commonality among these programs is a focus on changing organizations by shaping the self. The enterprise movement is of particular interest for this discussion because this research demonstrates the potential for the

shaping and controlling of identities inherent in these programs. The enterprise movement references a broad range of subtly similar theories and programs of corporate change that have become dominant in Western organizations since the 1980 s (Cohen & Musson, 2000). Examples of enterprise discourse include the excellence movement (Peters & Waterman, 1982), business process reengineering (Hammer & Champy, 1993), and lean manufacturing systems such as total quality management or just-in-time manufacturing. The purveyors of such programs, usually authors of best-selling management books who also consult and deliver paid presentations, have been labeled "gurus" to reflect their supposed expertise in discerning and teaching the secrets of business success.

Programs that make manifest the enterprise movement seek to transform not only organizations but employees and managers as well. Du Gay (1996) argues that programs of enterprise cultivate "enterprising qualities--such as self-reliance, personal responsibility, boldness and a willingness to take risks in the pursuit of goals--[that] are regarded as human virtues and promoted as such" (p. 56). Employees and managers, then, should develop themselves as enterprises, modifying inner states and outer behaviors to align with an organizationally defined outcome. Attempting to control employees by crafting their identities--identity regulation--according to enterprise discourse is now a central feature in the employer-employee relationship (Alvesson, 2001; Cohen & Musson, 2000; Covaleski, Dirsmith, Heian, & Samuel, 1998; Delbridge, 1995; du Gay and Salaman, 1992; du Gay, Salaman, & Rees, 1996).

The previous discussion shows how enterprise discourse, or self-help discourse more generally, is directed toward regulating the identities of individuals. But, as Tracy and Trethewey (2005) argue, "Identity is not necessarily imposed upon workers; employees take an active, strategic role in their acceptance of this organizationally preferred self" (p. 76). It is in this active, strategic process of identity formation that control and resistance play out. As a result, the key question guiding this research asks how employees actively engage self-help programs and embrace them, adopt them, reject these programs, or respond with some combination of these. The case study that follows pays close attention to the tension-filled process in which managers and employees with multifaceted identities encounter, negotiate, resist, and translate a self-help program.

Method
This study examined the implementation of Steven R. Covey's (1989) 7 Habits of Highly Effective People in one high-technology organization. We draw data from (1) a 3-day training course in how to use The 7 Habits and (2) in-depth interviews in which participants reflected on the implementation of the program in their daily lives. Analyses of these data complement earlier rhetorical assessments of The 7 Habits text (Jackson, 1999, 2001) and allow us to examine the implementation of a particular self-help discourse in a particular context. In the following sections, we introduce The 7 Habits text and the site for our study and then outline our data collection and analysis methods.

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
For several reasons, organization scholars have few empirical analyses of management gurus such as Stephen Covey, author of The 7 Habits (see Jackson, 1999, 2001 for an important exception). First, the popularity of management gurus' works may condemn them as "not serious" choices for scholars (May & Zorn, 2001). Second, organization scholars frequently neglect specific management gurus' ideas in favor of macrolevel analyses (for example, of enterprise culture) (May & Zorn). Finally, though The 7 Habits book and program are heavily used in business contexts (Jackson, 1999; Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 1996), scholars may see it as insignificant because it discusses individual self-help advice (Carlone, 2001) rather than organization-wide systems improvement.

This lack of attention and the reasons for it provide the warrants to examine critically The 7 Habits. The book offers a relatively individualized self-help program that may function as a program of identity regulation. As well, The 7 Habits has become institutionalized even as it has fallen from best-seller lists; thousands of people pass through Covey lectures and Franklin Covey training seminars each year, many government agencies have adopted the program to improve their practices, and school districts around the country have implemented

curricula based on the book. In short, The 7 Habits is a particularly enduring instance of the enterprise movement.

Covey organizes the book around seven habits that lead to personal success. Table 1 summarizes the contents of the book.

Habits 1 through 3 move a person along a "Maturity Continuum" from a state of "dependence" to a state of "independence," representing a "Private Victory." Accomplishing Habits 4 through 6 represents a "Public Victory," moving a person from "independence" to "interdependence." Habit 7 has both private and public dimensions and focuses on "personal renewal." The habits build upon one another in a cumulative fashion (Covey, 1989). The overall goal of the program is to restore one's "character ethic" by treating oneself as an enterprise. This requires, for instance, clarifying personal values, writing a mission statement capturing these values, and daily planning in light of the mission.

Jackson (1999, 2001) identified three themes that drive the dramatic appeal of The 7 Habits. References to "back to the farm" evoke nostalgia for agrarian life, helping people identify with the timeless principles of the habits. "Working from the inside out" offers a method for attaining self-improvement and taps into a belief in personal action and improvement. Finally, 'finding 'true north'" provides us with role models--men and women of character--whom we should emulate (Jackson, 2001, p. 101). By tapping into deeply seated cultural desires and models, the book resonates with the reader. We complement Jackson's textual analysis in that we show the process by which organizational members work out the ideas contained within the text.

Site: SkyWatch

SkyWatch (pseudonym) is a U.S. federal defense-oriented high-technology organization in the western United States. SkyWatch provides telecommunications and intelligence systems support to the military. Federal civilian employees, employees of private weapons contractors, and military personnel comprise the membership of SkyWatch, all under the command of military personnel.

During the data collection portion of this study (1999-2000), a deep Congressional budget cut had immersed SkyWatch and its members in a reorganization. One component of this reorganization required all members of SkyWatch to attend The 7 Habits training. The facility commander endorsed and mandated this training and provided the considerable resources necessary for the initiative. Training costs included $90 per attendee for materials, 3 days of training time, and annual salaries and recertification courses for four trainers.

Data Collection and Analysis

For this study, we relied on data gathered through participant observation and interviews. First, participant observation of a 3-day 7 Habits training seminar provided access to The 7 Habits discourse as a resource for personal and organizational change, the officially sanctioned implementation and use of this change program, and interactions of SkyWatch members as they were introduced to the program at a key point of dissemination and consumption. This data speaks to how SkyWatch members negotiate, individually and collectively, their take-up of the discourse, the cultural commonplaces underlying the discourse, and how the discourse translates into practice.

Each day of the training course, attended by 29 SkyWatch members and the first author, ran from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with a 1-hour lunch break. Two human resources personnel, Charles and Henry, specialists in training and development and certified by FranklinCovey [1] in The 7 Habits, led the trainees through each of The 7 Habits. (Trainees, men and women from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, ranged in age from about 19 to 60.) The training course had five objectives: (1) enhance personal and interpersonal effectiveness; (2) align organization and personal mission statements; (3) help establish a SkyWatch culture with a widely shared mission, strategy, and goals; (4) establish a common language at SkyWatch; and (5) develop attendee leadership skills.

Table 1. Contents of the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey, 1989)

Habit	Lesson
	Private Victory
Habit 1: Be Proactive	Personal values should guide how we respond to stimuli
Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind	We should mentally create our ideal futures before acting
Habit 3: Put First Things First	Prioritize those actions that will bring into existence our ideal futures
	Public Victory
Habit 4: Think Win-Win	Look for options that satisfy all involved
Habit 5: Seek First to Understand Then To Be Understood	Practicing empathic listening helps us understand others, which in turn helps them understand us.
Habit 6: Synergize	The whole is greater than the sum of its parts
	Personal Renewal
Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw	Ongoing personal production requires daily physical mental, spiritual, and social/emotional renewal

The first author participated in this training as an interested outsider, a university-based organization researcher curious about organization restructuring and The 7 Habits. This positioning afforded access to the naturally unfolding training, with its materials, activities, and conversations. The process of translating scratch notes and head notes (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) recorded during the training into fieldnotes began within 24 hours of the end of each training day and often extended over several days (Lindlof & Taylor). This process produced approximately 60 double-spaced pages of fieldnotes, in addition to those activities inscribed in course materials, such as the workbook.

Second, in-depth interviews were used to reveal how organization members were negotiating The 7 Habits in their daily lives. Interview accounts have proven effective at uncovering the principal values and decision premises that provide substance to identities (Tompkins & Cheney, 1983). Similarly, Lindlof and Grodin (1990) argue that although the use of some media, such as self-help books, tends to be a solitary act leading to internal changes, through accounts provided by interview participants, "the researcher can witness the purposeful embedding of media experience in the construction of self" (p. 21).

Respondent interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) with 12 individuals, averaging approximately 60 minutes each, centered on accounts of the use of The 7 Habits and provided insight into individuals' interpretations and uses of The 7 Habits. For example, questions asked respondents to rank and discuss the habits in order of personal importance and to relate specific instances of their use of the habits, such as in decision-making. Those interviewed had attended the training course during the previous 2 years. Due to security clearance restrictions, interviewees were recruited using a snowball sampling technique (Lindlof & Taylor). This technique led to the bulk of the interviews being conducted with a core group of devoted 7 Habits subscribers. These "early adopters" (Rogers, 1995) served as prototypes for other SkyWatch members to emulate and turn to for advice and information. This group of respondents proved particularly valuable for identifying the preferred employee according to The 7 Habits at SkyWatch. Indeed, we wish to highlight that the early adopters, a unique group of program devotees, nonetheless illuminated opportunities for both control and resistance.

Eight of the twelve interviews were conducted off-site, allowing them to be captured on audiotape. The remaining four interviews were conducted on-site and were not audiotaped because of security restrictions. Audiotapes were transcribed to capture what was said. For those not audiotaped, notes taken during the interview were written up within 24 hours. In several instances, follow-up questions with respondents helped to clarify these written accounts. The written records of the interviews totaled approximately 250 double-spaced pages.

Analysis of both the participant observation and the interview data occurred throughout the collection process. Spradley's (1980) taxonomy of categories of meaning provided an initial set of codes used to organize data. As the data set grew, a qualitative data management software program aided the comparison of data excerpts within

and across codes and, when appropriate, the creation or combination of codes. Of particular interest to us were those data points that highlighted the interpretation and use of The 7 Habits by SkyWatch members in relation to control and resistance. The iterative process of data collection and analysis led to several core codes and themes and allows us to ground our claims in the observation and interview data.

Results and Analysis

Our analysis sheds light on how "universal" organizational and personal change programs are made concrete for particular organizations and people. This process of making the universal particular and concrete reveals the opening and closing of various avenues for control and resistance. Fitting the universally applicable 7 Habits program to the locally specific site of SkyWatch occurred in two "phases." In the first phase, the program encountered organizational exigencies and supporting and competing cultural beliefs. This largely occurred in the context of the training seminars. In the second phase, individual members worked through and with the program to make it personally meaningful.

Phase One: Applying The 7 Habits to SkyWatch

In general, creators and advocates of self-help and organizational change programs position their programs as universal in that they may be applied to any person and any organization. When adopted, however, these universal programs meet the demands and vagaries of specific sites of implementation. The resources embedded in the programs intersect adoptees' specific needs, hopes, and inclinations.

Those leading The 7 Habits implementation at SkyWatch worked hard to fit the program to the site and the site to the program. This work began when program advocates persuaded the facility commander of the local value of The 7 Habits by framing (perceived) organization problems around SkyWatch members' lack of "trust." At the time of the restructuring [2] announcement, human resources trainers were carrying out a firm-wide Total Quality Management (TQM) initiative, which they believed to have failed. Training participants saw the program as unachievable, detached from SkyWatch goals, and undesirable for their home departments. The lead HR trainers, certified by FranklinCovey in The 7 Habits, framed the TQM failure in terms of "trust," echoing Covey's (1989) own call for "high trust, high performance cultures." SkyWatch members, the trainers said, wanted little to do with "the quality stuff' because they "lacked trust." The 7 Habits program remedied the specific problem of trust and formed a crucial part of the broader reorganization. TQM, the trainers argued, addressed structural issues, not individuals' internal states; changing the organization of SkyWatch required changing the people of SkyWatch, according to the philosophy and practices of The 7 Habits. The site commander agreed and mandated the training for all SkyWatch members.

To begin this change, the training seminar removed SkyWatch members from their daily routines, providing space for personal and organizational reflection. It is in this space, outside the daily work routine, where the transition from universal self-help program to specific context intensifies. To illustrate, within the first few minutes of the observed course, one of the trainers confronted the likelihood that some attendees probably had "reasons to be elsewhere." "I want to ask you to put it aside for the next three days ... at the very least, don't let your not wanting to be here interfere with the learning of those around you." A related appeal, coupled with the overt presence of authority, came when a member of the SkyWatch command structure, a colonel in Air Force uniform and flight jacket, visited the course on the same morning. "I've been through this and have found it to be very helpful in my work and my life outside of work." As well, "This training can help us handle our budget cuts and re-engineering, as we all need to focus on the SkyWatch goals and mission."

As the course proceeded, implementing The 7 Habits at SkyWatch relied upon a dual process of universal appeals and specific implementation technologies (Rose, 1999) such as a mission statement alignment workshop. This process varied between the use of ambiguity to allow the ideas to be shaped according to particular work contexts and with respect to individual and group preferences, and the use of strategies that worked to narrow the ambiguity to an acceptable range.

The "Mission Statement" workshop, for instance, in which participants "aligned to the extent possible" their personal mission statements with the SkyWatch mission, represented one important implementation technology.

SkyWatch trainers themselves had developed this component to meet the local need for "a common language and culture." They prompted SkyWatch members to ask, "How do I fit in here? If I don't, I'm going to have to ask myself some hard questions." "Loyalty" resided in the overlap between the "organization mission" and the "personal mission." Empowerment occurred when "individual talents [were] unleashed" in alignment with the organization mission.

As studies of accounts (Tompkins & Cheney, 1983) suggest, the act of writing and verbalizing a personal mission creates and reinforces individual identities. As well, with the SkyWatch mission in a privileged position, the mission statement workshop helps sort out the overlaps, gaps, and incongruities between personal and organizational values. In fact, some people chose to leave SkyWatch after the mission workshop helped them recognize that their interests lay elsewhere. Of course, another perspective on this must highlight ethical and practical problems of erasing diversity from the site. As Covey himself has said, those who fall too far outside the acceptable boundaries are "purified out" (Whitford, 1996, p. 82) of the company.

Still, matching the program to the specifics of SkyWatch would not be seamless. One source of disruption stemmed from the fact that The 7 Habits lessons did not always fit with the present organizing conditions. For example, one course attendee inquired how to ensure that all parties to collaboration fulfill their commitments. The lead trainer outlined "win-win agreements," a negotiation process in which parties lay out expectations for duties, deadlines, resources, accountability, and consequences. The trainer's advocacy of "win-win" met with varied reactions. Some displayed enthusiasm and hope for putting the agreements in place. Others responded skeptically. For example, one trainee asked, "Given the current climate [of reengineering], how can I get [coworkers] to do this with me?" Starting the process may build trust, he was advised. "We have to rely to some extent on setting a moral example. We have to start the changes we want, [for] we cannot turn away from the moral example this establishes." At this, a member of the reengineering steering committee, also a training participant, jumped in to support the trainer.

This is the stuff we have to do if we're going to be successful. I know things are changing, but what really matters is how we handle the change. It's just too early to throw our hands up. Who knows how we'll be impacted by all of this?

As this exchange shows, reengineering-inspired skepticism and caution often spilled out, causing SkyWatch members to look out for themselves. The restructuring partially contradicted efforts to achieve empowerment and trust.

In addition to SkyWatch-specific appeals, trainers turned to U.S. cultural commonplaces as topoi. Just as communication theories build upon and contest communication commonplaces (Craig, 1999), The 7 Habits builds upon and contests various American cultural commonplaces. The cultural premises of the program enabled both control and resistance, depending on the resonance or dissonance prompted by the cultural reference.

In an example of how the program resonated with participants' U.S. cultural immersion, trainers inaugurated the course with a focus on the individual and his or her inner being. The purpose of learning the habits, trainees were told, is "to lead our lives in a truly effective way" so that we might develop "good character" according to "inner principles." Such an appeal laid out a familiar agenda for the trainees. For many in the US, a desire to develop good habits is not unusual, particularly when good habits help define and improve one's work and worth (Weber, 1958). Even in the most successful organizations, let alone one undergoing a reengineering, people are likely to look favorably upon a course or program that teaches them how to develop "good habits" to lead "principled lives." An appeal to self-improvement activated key elements of American cultural wisdom, made the content familiar, and helped allay objections participants might have raised about the material.

Still, contradiction and contestation existed in the articulation of course content and American cultural values. Though the course trainers reminded the audience that gaining independence set the stage for interdependence,

resistance arose when the American embrace of "the individual" and "competition" collided with a desire for "community" and "collaboration." For example, "career military men," as one trainer described them, raised some of the strongest criticisms of the habits of interdependence: Habit 4: Think Win-Win; Habit 5: Seek First to Understand Then To Be Understood; and Habit 6: Synergize. A number of members of this SkyWatch sub-group claimed that active listening, understanding, and cooperation "will never work" because competition so pervades U.S. institutions and the American psyche. Others went further in their objections and argued that win-win "violates the essence" of U.S. capitalist society and, therefore, should not work. One training course attendee illustrated the benefits of win-win by referring to a local youth soccer league that focused on skill development. To encourage player development rather than winning, game scores were not kept. One man, drawing upon deeply held American values of competition, called the league "communistic" and recommended that it "be banned."

The subgroup portrayed here brought to the surface primary elements of American culture (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996)to push back against some of The 7 Habits. Their oppositional reading (Hall, 1980) draws upon the awkward juxtaposition of "individualism" and "collaboration" in the change program and indicates how some of the program philosophy and prescriptions contradict some American cultural commonplaces. In other words, many evocations of cultural commonplaces carry with them opposing or contesting ideas. Hence, necessarily embedded in the program are resources that may generate resistance, depending on the specific context of enactment. The meaning of SkyWatch as a patriotic site due to its role in the U.S. defense network likely played a role in what we witnessed.

This first phase of implementation foregrounds the presence of organizational and cultural dimensions of The 7 Habits program at SkyWatch. It is this presence that necessitates and justifies the change program and simultaneously helps provoke resistance. In the second phase of implementation, as the context of the training gives way to the work of implementing the program in one's daily life, these dimensions remain and continue to activate both control and resistance.

Phase Two: Applying The 7 Habits to One's Life

The insulated space of the training eventually gave way to the close reality of one's life, inaugurating the second "phase" of fitting The 7 Habits to SkyWatch. As Sky-Watch members worked to apply the program in their daily lives, they negotiated several tensions: (1) the promotion of empowerment in a context marked by the presence of hierarchical authority, (2) the balance of work demands with private pursuits, and (3) the balance between self and other. These tensions animated opportunities for control and resistance.

Empowerment-authority

The everyday experience of SkyWatch members revealed various concerns related to how to enact empowerment while coordinating with others. In particular, some ambivalence about The 7 Habits program stemmed from a disjuncture between the emphasis in the program on the ideals of empowerment and collaboration and the ongoing presence of hierarchical authority in the organization. A 19-year-old Air Force private captured this when she exclaimed, "I still don't see how this applies to me. I'm a grunt. I have to follow orders no matter what I think. Why do I need a plan?"

One member reflected on the discrepancies surrounding "win-win" relations: "In a lot of cases, given our relative positions and hierarchies where we work, there is going to be some win-lose." This member continued at length:

I work for a man who has his own agenda [and it] doesn't necessarily agree with [our] charter. The charter is pretty much in consonance with my own Mission Statement. Those things that
contribute to the mission and goals are the things that I want to do. He doesn't necessarily see it that way. He might want us to do something that will enhance his own stature [with] our next up in the chain of command. If we can do that and still accomplish the stuff that's on the wall [charter], then that's fine. But if we can't, then we aren't going to have a win-win. He is going to win and I'm going to lose, because he is the boss. And our customer is going to lose. My background was Navy. In the Navy, there is an obligation to tell the next person

up what you see as the consequences of a proposed action. The leader or manager takes all of those inputs in and makes a decision. Everybody says, "Ay, Ay," does an about-face, and goes off and does what the boss tells you to do. So that's pretty much what this situation is. He's a military guy. I'm former military. I understand the relationship very well.

This reflection cites problems related to hierarchy, authority, and self-interest and suggests how unique features of organizational and professional cultures condition the interpretation and performance of The 7 Habits. These comments indicate the limits of The 7 Habits program and show that when push comes to shove, the ambiguity of The 7 Habits may be resolved through traditional hierarchy. Or, in other words, the newness of the change program and its necessary ambiguity because of its universality yielded to the concrete and familiar of the particular site.

At the same time, these comments indicate more than a failed change program. The 7 Habits operates as a resource for critiquing SkyWatch practices and structures, extending its application and implications beyond its self-help core. The language of collaboration, such as "win-win," provides a benchmark for assessing the performance of SkyWatch personnel. Control and resistance intertwine here in complex ways. We might highlight this person's adoption of the program as a case of control. Yet, this adoption lends an ethical standard to critique SkyWatch and perhaps other relationships.

Other members found innovative ways to serve empowerment and authority simultaneously. Many early adopters praised the lesson on planning for and acting toward the future. This future orientation helped them focus on what was most important and manage, even integrate, competing aspects of their lives. One interviewee described her use of her SkyWatch-required Individual Development Plan (IDP) in this way. Her IDP articulated personal and professional 5- and 10-year goals. This plan then supplied her with organizationally sanctioned reasons to emphasize her own future with her superiors, even when this future failed to coincide with the official SkyWatch future, such as pursuing an unrelated university degree. In other words, the ongoing development of the self required by SkyWatch authorities often exceeded "work boundaries," allowing both adherence to authority and personal growth and autonomy.

Work-nonwork

As the example of the IDP suggests, a second tension experienced by early adopters centered on how to appropriately balance work and nonwork activities. As with empowerment, this tension stemmed, in part, from the change program. Given the emphasis on the crucial role of "family" and "friends" in the life of the "effective" person in The 7 Habits text and training, and the great value placed upon "family" within American culture, extending the program to these private settings often came quite easily. Some scholars have highlighted such extension of "work programs" to these other areas of life as troubling, representing a colonization (Deetz, 1992) of everyday life (Hancock & Tyler, 2004). However, at least in this case, extending the program to one's everyday life allowed some early adopters to push against the demands of SkyWatch.
One interviewee, for example, described how The 7 Habits program helped him cope with work-related stress. He spoke of the need for "balance" in his life.

[The music] is specifically for me, for my own sanity.... Balance between the two sides of my life. The work side, which is anywhere from 50 to 60 hours a week, and the other side, which is
the other 100 hours a week. You have to have balance, and that does seem to be the most important factor I took from all of the 7 Habits stuff that I wrote and studied. I had an idea that [balance] was missing before. I had the idea that things were out of whack or out of balance.
Although these comments may depict an employee who has privatized a structural problem, the change program helped him recognize, label, and address a predicament-his "out of whack" life. The 7 Habits, ostensibly a work program, nonetheless mitigated and alleviated the spread of work.

Another interviewee lamented the common reliance on a "military structure" with regard to time and authority, lending a "factory feel" to SkyWatch. This "emphasis on punching the clock," with its tight and rigid structuring of time, often denied him the freedom and flexibility to prioritize and plan "as intended by Covey." Still, The 7

Habits helped him "stay focused" on matters of personal importance, such as family. Work "does not care about family," he said, but he pushed against this by prioritizing time and energy for family by "putting first things first" (Habit 3).

The program did often lead to welcome outcomes for SkyWatch, such as clarity of purpose or reduced stress in relation to one's work. However, clarity of purpose or reduced stress also often led program adopters to recognize that work required too much of them. They left day-planners in their offices, set limits on the number of hours worked, and made time for family and leisure. In effect, they used the program tools to reflect on and organize their pursuits, just as they should have.

Self-other

A final tension early adopters negotiated in their daily implementation of The 7 Habits program dealt with the balance between concern for self and other. The program encourages ethical relations with others as a way to learn about and practice the habits privately and publicly. The role of others in social relationships posed little problem for those interviewed. Engaging with others in a more public, collaborative manner at work presented serious challenges.

Several interviewees spoke of their ability to use The 7 Habits lessons to improve relations with friends and family and as a way to engage in self-improvement. In the following interview excerpt, one member described his interactions with a colleague about their use of the program.

We talk about this a lot. We are counselors for one another. Part of "Sharpen the Saw" is [reflection]. We have agreed, whenever we get the opportunity, we sit down over coffee and talk about how we are doing with the habits, what is going well, what we have problems with. It's a lot of targeted conversation.

As described here, The 7 Habits is a resource for interacting with others in particular ways; it aids people in "doing" effectiveness with those around them.

Interviews with early adopters showed much more comfort with these kinds of interactions and with the first half of The 7 Habits program, for here the ideas were well within the ontological and political boundaries set by the deeply held belief in individualism. In contrast, individualism hindered those aspects of the program oriented toward collaboration (Habit 4--Think Win-Win, Habit 5--Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood, and Habit 6--Synergize). Interviewees expressed ambivalence about this ideal: "These three [Habits 1-3], you can do yourself. The second three [Habits 4-6], you have to rely on someone else's cooperativeness. Or someone else's good will or what have you." Another interviewee's experiences at work had shown her that a willingness to collaborate might suggest to coworkers "a weakness to be exploited." Finally, concerns were raised about the time and energy needed to understand someone and the risk that "sometimes when you understand another person, indicate understanding in another person, they see that as consent for their view. And that is something you need to guard against."

These comments foreground the self in the self-other relationship. Ambivalence toward collaboration often resulted from a fear that the self would be dominated by others in and through attempts at understanding and "synergizing." Reluctance to practice these portions of the change program stemmed from the organizational and cultural contexts, with emphasis on uncertainty around the reengineering and the value of the individual, respectively. As well, the program itself placed the individual in a primary role, in achieving "effectiveness," with independence always preceding interdependence.

This second phase of implementation brought the program into the everyday experience of SkyWatch members. In this personal working out of the program, members discovered places of resistance even as they encountered moments of control.

Implications

The previous analysis informs current theoretical concerns related to control and resistance and offers some practical implications in regards to the "self-help" genre of organizational change programs. Theoretically, this paper offers three primary insights. First, to have a meaningful effect on the everyday practices of people and organizations, "universal" change programs must be connected to the local and concrete problems that confront particular organizations and people. Second, universal change programs provide various and often unintended avenues for control and resistance as they are translated for local application. Third, analyses of control and resistance must be conducted across organizational boundaries.

First, this study suggests that the implementation of organization change programs targeted at identity regulation involve negotiating, over time, a tension (Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004) between ambiguity and specificity. The appeal of the self-help programs may be partially attributed to the polysemy of ideas that characterize the programs. Like a popular television program (Fiske, 1986), gurus must craft messages that appeal to large audiences to be successful. The necessary ambiguity of the messages allows audience members to appropriate them in varied ways. In the case of self-help training, the programs themselves are often positioned as universally applicable. When locally implemented, however, the balance between ambiguous-but-universal value premises and specific-but-more-exclusive value choices must be negotiated.

While the polysemic nature of programs like The 7 Habits may partially explain their appeal, it is the translation process between the general values embedded in the program and the specifics of organizational and personal contexts that helps determine the impact of the discourse on shaping the multifaceted identities of participants. In our case, at times, The 7 Habits was used to shape the meaning of organizational events, as when the lead trainers framed the failure of the TQM program at SkyWatch as a lack of trust. At other times, though, we clearly saw the interpretation of The 7 Habits framed through specific experiences and contexts, as when one member considered the practicality of "win-win" through the lens of his military-style boss. In addition, this research notes the many participants in the translation of the text, including the trainers, coworkers, and family members. Organization members do not encounter change programs as isolated individuals but as relationally embedded beings. This working out of the tension between ambiguity and specificity suggests that specific context is critical to understanding how self-help programs may influence identity regulation (Trethewey, 1997). While analysis of organization change texts provides some insight into these programs (Jackson, 1999; Lair et al., 2005), to understand how they are taken up it is critical to examine their implementation as a temporally and contextually bound process.

A second primary implication of this research suggests that self-help programs provide unexpected resources for resisting organizational control. Although previous research has suggested that control may, ironically, be tightened through ambiguity (Markham, 1996), this research suggests that ambiguity may also provide important resources for resistance (Larson & Tompkins, 2005). Employees may find resources that facilitate resistance in the programs themselves. In this case, some members used The 7 Habits to push back against organizational demands. For example, one employee framed "put first things first" in terms of spending more time with his family at the expense of work time. The program itself, though strategically implemented to build trust and character among employees, provided resources that employees used to reflect on and critique the organization.

This study thus continues the trend in recent research that complicates the relationship between control and resistance (Ashcraft, 2005; Larson & Tompkins, 2005; Mumby, 2005). While potentially exerting considerable influence on the identities of employees and managers (du Gay et al., 1996), self-help and "guru"-type programs also provide alternatives for identity formation. This case points to many factors that could lead to control or resistance. In particular, we note the tension among ambiguity and specificity, cultural commonplaces, organizational values, individual identities, coworkers, family members, and the self-help program itself as shaping how control and resistance plays out in this particular context. Our conceptual understanding of resistance is strengthened by embracing this messiness of organizational life.

As a third primary contribution, this study supports efforts to expand the container metaphor so often used to study organizational communication (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). Control is usually perceived as something that owners/managers impose on employees. This study of The 7 Habits suggests that we broaden our scope to consider not only internal sources of control but also those external sources that shape control and frame resistance. This case points to some of the specific ways in which macro- and microdiscourses intersect to shape the meaning of a self-help program and its potential for identity regulation. These identity programs are created by outside gurus, imposed by managers, implemented by certified trainers, and embraced and rejected by managers and employees. Thus, identity regulation programs necessarily problematize the metaphor of the organization as a container. In addition, the subjects of these self-help programs, with their complex, multifaceted identities (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005), draw upon internal and external discourses themselves as they encounter and translate these identity programs into their own identities. As a result, studying value-laden discourses and programs of identity regulation highlights the porous boundary between culture and organization (Carlone & Taylor, 1998) and requires moving away from traditional distinctions between internal and external organization environments, instead focusing on the adoption, adaptation, and resistance of discourses as they move fluidly among contexts.

In addition to these primary implications, this research speaks to two additional issues, the relationship between individual and collective forms of resistance and the effectiveness of self-help change programs. As shown above, meaning and context are central to resistance. Many of the meanings attached to The 7 Habits at SkyWatch catalyzed individual and local resistance. How, then, might individual acts of resistance be structured and combined into collective expressions of dissent? One possibility may lie in the cultural resources embedded within and so often drawn upon to contest The 7 Habits. Cultural commonplaces, by definition, cut across individuals. Aggregating and organizing individual responses into something larger may be possible by articulating individual responses to cultural commonplaces.

Thus, developing collective action out of largely individual responses requires a robust language for and strategies of relationship and cooperation. Reactions of SkyWatch members to The 7 Habits are instructive on this point. The 7 Habits program devotes considerable attention to the vitality of relationship and collaboration. In fact, Covey (1989) argues that the habits build upon one another, with personal (or "private") success then leading to relational (or "public") success. SkyWatch members, however, separated the personal from the relational. They found the prescriptions for cooperation particularly difficult to understand and perform. This should perhaps not be surprising given the historical place of individualism in U.S. culture and the more recent amplification of this value by the conservative movement. Still, collective action must confront the tendency to begin and end organizational and political interventions with the individual.

Individualism also influences the effectiveness of the change program studied here. The enterprise movement rests heavily upon the premise that enterprising individuals are good for enterprising firms. Similarly, self-help oriented change programs assume that improving the lives of individuals will improve the firms that employ these individuals. This study exposes a gap in these presumed relations. At least in the case of The 7 Habits at SkyWatch, those individuals who used the program to improve themselves often acted in ways that critiqued or subverted the firm. Individuals privileged personal or family time over work projects or used the injunction to develop "win-win" agreements as a criterion to judge the actions of coworkers and superiors. Organizations are more than collections of rational individuals acting in their own interests.

Change programs that emphasize the individual may harm ongoing coordination and goal attainment. Perhaps change programs that emphasize relationships instead of individualism will have better outcomes for organizational development efforts. Still, as we note above, The 7 Habits responds to this by strongly advocating for cooperation, precisely the part of the change program that presented SkyWatch members with significant difficulty.

To conclude, this study casts doubt on the ability of self-help and enterprise-oriented change programs to function as a seamless means of employee identity regulation and control. This analysis suggests that while exerting some influence over personal lives and organizational practices, there are considerable limitations to

the reach of these programs. No personal and organizational program can account for all the variables, over time, that influence the meanings and practices attached to and the internalization of a value and change system. Self-help programs, such as The 7 Habits, contain resources for resisting organizational control as employees (re)shape the priorities in their lives and then use these priorities in the ongoing act of organization. Close, critical analyses of change programs in use should remain mindful of such programs' often contradictory, contingent, and coincidental nature to reveal what we might fear and celebrate.

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Notes

[1] FranklinCovey is the name of the publicly traded company that Stephen R. Covey helps lead. The company, formed out of the 1997 merger of the Covey Leadership Center and Franklin Quest, sells time-management and day-planning products, and it offers training seminars on time management, The 7 Habits, leadership, presentation skills, long-range planning, and several other topics.

[2] According to these lead trainers, SkyWatch-sanctioned use of Covey materials developed after the U.S. Congress ordered a restructuring of SkyWatch by cutting the facility budget in 1997. The budget cut, in the tens of millions of dollars, forced SkyWatch members to embark on "a budget review, a re-structuring, a re-engineering, and a downsizing." The structural transformation process began in late 1998 and neared its conclusion at the time of the data collection for this study, in winter 2000.