

BOGUS EMPOWERMENT

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Workplace participation can mean many things, and unfortunately, democratic participation in the workplace is all too frequently a cover for the same old authoritarian leadership structures. Very few organizations actually allow employees at all levels of the organization to have a shaping influence on policy; as a result, employees who are promised participatory structures can become easily disillusioned. Quality circles and similar programs are often used to pacify employees and defuse potential resistance to

employment practices that may actually be harsh or even abusive.

The term used for worker empowerment that does not really empower anyone at all is “bogus empowerment” defined as *“the use of therapeutic fictions to make people feel better about themselves, eliminate conflict, and satisfy their desire to belong, so that they will freely choose to work toward the goals of the organization (control of individualism) and be productive (instrumentalism). Leaders who offer bogus empowerment are unauthentic, insincere, and disrespectful of others. They believe that they can change others without changing themselves”* (pp. 64–65) [573]. The sociologist C. Wright Mills offered one of the clearest articulations of bogus empowerment early in the twentieth century: *“The moral problem of social control in America today is less the explicit domination of men than their manipulation into self-coordinated and altogether cheerful subordinates”* [573]

Excerpt from Bloom and Farragher, *Destroying Sanctuary: The Crisis in Human Service Delivery Systems*

- [Link to Increased Authoritarianism](#)
- [Link to Authoritarianism](#)
- [Link to Terror Management Theory](#)
- [Link to Commitment to Democracy](#)