

Postmodern Subjects/postmodern Texts.(Postmodern Studies 13)

Post-Modern Organizations or Postmodern Organization Theory?

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Abstract

Postmodernism is beginning to enter organization studies. After introducing the contours of the debate, some of the early contributions are critically reviewed and then subjected to sympathetic scrutiny. A distinction between the periodization 'post-modern' and a 'postmodern' epistemology is explored in terms of its consequences for writing about organizations. Each position is shown to have difficulties attached to it and the political ramifications of these are explored. Some tentative suggestions are made to explain the rising popularity of the 'post' within organizational writing.

Introduction

'Why do we find it congenial to speak of organizations as structures but not clouds, systems but not songs, weak or strong but not tender or passionate? Is it because organizations physically resemble one but not the other, that we somehow discern through the clamorous hurly burly something that is structural, but not cloudlike, systemic rather than rhapsodic, strong but not tender? What kind of structure could we have in mind that the continual movement of bodies, papers, electronic blips and so on should bear a physical resemblance? And are those who think they observe structure simply blind to systemic process, and those who spy process insensitive to obvious signals of strength and weakness?' (Gergen 1989: 1).

This paper addresses the recent rise of interest in the relevance of the postmodernity debate for organizational analysis. Over the last few years there have been a number of attempts to re-focus the study of organizations towards concerns that it has traditionally marginalized. Thus there have been writings from Blyton et al. on time and social organization (1989), Clegg on circuits of power (1989), an explosion of interest in culture and symbolism (for example Turner 1989), Morgan's writing on metaphor (1986) and a focus on sexuality and gender (Hearn et al. 1989) that can be seen to have moved organizational analysis away from its image as a grey collection of managerialist typologies. Whilst versions of functionalism are still commonly accepted as dominant, the area has become increasingly sensitive to concerns and concepts developed in other fields. The most recent of these injections has been postmodernity, and certain writers are making claims for its importance that deserve

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narrative, we can understand its fragmentation, which is often met with critical . by making people into commodities and commodities into subjects. Marxist Postmodern literature is literature characterized by reliance on narrative techniques such as .. For the postmodernist, no ordering is extremely dependent upon the subject, so paranoia often straddles the line between delusion and brilliant insight. .. Fiction: Postmodern Studies 38; Textet Studies in Comparative Literature. Attention is drawn to the possibility of opening up subject positions which allow the modern and postmodern to 'speak', so that heterogeneity and the recognition of difference might .. the deferral of meaning), action research can examine the data/text from the International Journal of Lifelong Education, 13, pp. One of the earliest journals on the Internet, Postmodern Culture (PMC) started as a PMC offers a forum for commentary, criticism, and theory on subjects ranging from of PMC in a comprehensive web-based interface with full-text searchability. Volume 13, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

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