

## Organization Science as Social Construction: Postmodern Potentials

KENNETH J. GERGEN

*Swarthmore College*

TOJO JOSEPH THATCHENKERY

*George Mason University*

*We critically examine three major assumptions of modernist organization science: rational agency, empirical knowledge, and language as representation. With these assumptions problematized, we are positioned for a postmodern turn in the discipline. From a postmodern standpoint, we are moved to replace rational agency with communal rationality, empirical knowledge with social construction, and language as representation with language as action. Outcomes for an organization science place special emphasis on reconstructing and enriching the aims and methods of research and on critical reflection, generative theorizing, and scholarly action within organizations.*

There is broad agreement that, at least within the Western world, the greater part of the present century has been dominated by an interlocking array of conceptions that—retrospectively—may be termed *modernist*. These conceptions, in turn, are related to various techno-material conditions, undergird many forms of institutional life, and inform a broad array of cultural practices—for example, within literature, art, architecture, and industry. Analysts focus on differing aspects of this period, often using the term *modernity* to emphasize a composite of technological, economic, and institutional features (Giddens, 1990; Jameson, 1984) and *modernism* to speak of

---

*Kenneth J. Gergen is Mustin Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology at Swarthmore College.*

*Tojo Joseph Thatchenkery is an assistant professor in the Program on Social and Organizational Learning at George Mason University.*

JOURNAL OF APPLIED BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE, Vol. 32 No. 4, December 1996 356-377  
© 1996 NTL Institute

356

intellectual and cultural patternings (Frascina & Harrison, 1982; Levenson, 1984). Although unanimity of characterization is far from complete, there is also a general recognition that this interrelated set of modernist beliefs is slowly losing its commanding sense of validity. This consciousness of disjunction is variously indexed by writings on the demise of history (Fukuyama, 1992), nature (McKibben, 1989), the individual (Ashley, 1990), coherent identity (Gergen, 1991), objective representation (Marcus & Fisher, 1986), empirical psychology (Parker & Shotter, 1990), literary theory (de Man, 1986), and philosophic foundations (Rorty, 1979). These and other works examine the pitfalls and potentials of life in a *postmodern* context (Gergen, 1991; Pfohl, 1992).

Drawing sustenance from Robert Cooper's (Cooper & Burrell, 1988) volatile critiques of the systemic orientation of modern organization theory, one pauses to consider organization science itself. For the very theoretical suppositions under attack in Cooper's work are wedded to a body of interlocking beliefs concerning organization science as a knowledge-generating discipline. If the theoretical premises are placed in question, so by implication are the metatheoretical commitments from which these premises spring. In the present offering, we shall first consider prominent ways in which traditional organization science is rooted in modernist assumptions, along with several major threats that postmodern thought poses for such assumptions. More importantly, given the waning of the modernist tradition, we must ask what postmodern thought can offer as an alternative conception of organization science. Are postmodern critiques simply nihilistic, as many believe? As we shall propose, certain arguments within the postmodern dialogues, when properly extended, yield a promising vision of future organization science. After developing these arguments, we shall explore several significant implications and illustrate their potential in ongoing work.

## **MODERNISM AND THE FORMATION OF ORGANIZATION SCIENCE**

To appreciate the emerging elements of postmodern thought, let us first isolate key presumptions underlying organization science in the modernist frame. More broadly, this is to articulate a number of the constitutive beliefs that have defined the very character of organization science—its major forms of research, its theoretical commitments, and its practices within the workplace. In effect, the implications of these beliefs have been evidenced in virtually every corner of the discipline—from the classroom to the research site, forms of publication, theoretical content, and the dispositions carried by specialists into organizations themselves. Although there is much to be said about science in the modernist mold, we shall confine ourselves here to several presumptions of relevance to future developments.

### **The Rational Agent**

As most scholars agree, modernist thought in the present century has important roots in the Enlightenment (the rise from the "dark" or "medieval" ages), a period

when the works of philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, and Kant were giving sophisticated voice to emerging conceptions of the individual and the cosmos. Although history has furnished many significant detours (e.g., nineteenth-century romanticism), Enlightenment assumptions have continued into the present century, fueled to new heights by various scientific and technological advances (attributed to Enlightenment presumptions), the growth of industry and prevalence of warfare (both of which increased society's dependency on science and technology), and various philosophic and cultural movements (e.g., logical positivism, modern architecture, modern music).<sup>1</sup>

The Enlightenment was a historical watershed primarily owing to the dignity that it granted to individual rationality. Enlightenment thinkers assailed all forms of totalitarianism—royal and religious. As it was argued, within each individual lies a bounded and sacred principality, a domain governed by the individual's own capacities for careful observation and rational deliberation. It is only my thought itself, proposed Descartes, that provides a certain foundation for all else. It is this eighteenth-century valorization of the individual mind that came to serve as the major rationalizing device for the twentieth-century beginnings of organization science. The effects here are twofold: First, the individual mind of the worker/employee/manager becomes a preeminent object of study, and, second, knowledge of the organization is considered a byproduct of the individual rationality of the scientific investigator. On the one hand, if individual rationality is the major source of human conduct, then to unlock its secrets is to gain dominion over the future well-being of the organization. At the same time, it is the individual investigator, trained in systematic rational thought, who is best equipped to carry out such study.

More explicitly, these assumptions have been realized in major conceptions of the individual and the organization emerging from organizational study since virtually its inception. For many scholars (see, e.g., Clark & Wilson, 1961; de Grazia, 1960), Taylorism provided the modernist model of organizational life par excellence. On one hand, it viewed the individual worker as a quasi-rational agent who responds to various inputs (e.g., orders, incentives) in systematic ways. Although shorn of the dehumanizing qualities of early Taylorism, the general orientation gave rise to contemporary beliefs that management is a process of planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling. Such beliefs continued to pervade organization science theories and practices. For example, congenial to these beliefs are job enrichment, job rotation, job enlargement, job design (Hackman & Lawler, 1971), and management by objectives (MBO) techniques extensively used during the 1960s and 1970s. More recently, planning-programming-budgeting systems (PPBS) and total quality management (TQM) are often conceptualized as "input-devices" used to derive the greatest output from employees.

Similarly, the belief in rational agency figures in the conception of the ideal manager. Contingency theories (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) reveal steps that the individual manager can take to create the optimal balance between the organization and environmental conditions. The field of strategic management similarly rests on

the assumption of individual rationality (Thompson & Strickland, 1992). For example, expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), the path-goal theory of leadership (House, 1971), and goal-setting theory (Locke, 1968) are all based on assumptions of individual rationality. The seminal work of Herbert Simon (1957) on "bounded rationality"—although recognizing limitations in the human capacity to process information—is premised on the assumption of individual decision making. Management education and training programs are similarly developed to furnish managers with managerial competencies crucial to producing superior performance (Lobel, 1990).

In addition to informing the view of the individual worker and the function of the manager, the commitment to rational process has also shaped the contours of macro-organization theories. It is this topic to which Cooper and Burrell (1988) have largely addressed themselves. As they point out, "The significance of the modern corporation lies precisely in its invention of the idea of performance, especially in its economizing mode, and then creating a reality out of the idea by ordering social relations according to the model of functional rationality" (p. 96). They illustrate this claim with the work of Bell (1974) and Luhmann (1976). Similarly, cybernetic and general systems conceptions—such as those championed by Boulding, Bertalanffy, and Weiner—have contributed to the rational systems perspectives of organization theory. As Shafritz and Ott (1987) point out, the systems orientation is philosophically and methodologically tied to Taylorism.

Finally, the belief in rational agency undergirds the self-conception of the organization scientist and the view of his or her role vis-à-vis the organization. At the foundational level one could argue that organization theory is the quintessential outcome of rational thought, and this presumption grants to the professional theorist a degree of superiority. In the modernist zeitgeist, it is the most rational voice that should prevail in the interminable contest of opinions. And it is this implicit claim to reason that has largely provided the justification for organizational consulting: The consultant, by traditional standards, is (or should be) one who—by virtue of scientific training—thinks more clearly, objectively, profoundly, or creatively than the layman and is thus deserving of voice within the organization. This logic is amplified by a second modernist belief.

### **Empirical Knowledge**

A second legacy of Enlightenment discourse is a strong emphasis on the powers of individual observation. It is reason, in combination with observation, that enables the individual's opinion to count on par with those of religious and royal lineage. This emphasis is played out most importantly in empiricist philosophy over the centuries and surfaces most vigorously in the present century in forms of logical positivist or empiricist philosophy. For logical empiricists (see, e.g., Ayer, 1940), only those propositions linked unambiguously to observables are candidates for scientific consideration, and it is only the careful testing of scientific propositions that can lead to increments in knowledge. Within the behavioral sciences, these views not only became

central rationalizing devices—placing the behavioral sciences, as they did, on equal footing with chemistry and physics—they also stimulated enormous interest in research methodology and statistics.

It is within this soil that organization science took initial root. The presumption was that there is a concrete organizational reality, an objective world, capable of empirical study (Eastman & Bailey, 1994). To illustrate, in the premier issue of the *Journal of the Academy of Management*, William Wolf (1958) proclaimed, "We can describe an organization as a living thing; it has a concrete social environment, a formal structure, recognized goals, and a variety of needs" (p. 14). Similarly, in his widely cited *Modern Organization Theory*, Mason Haire (1959) discussed the "shape" and other "geometric properties" of an organization, arguing that organizations have bodily properties and growth characteristics typical of the biological world. This concrete character of the organization was also evident in Talcott Parson's contribution to the first issue of *Administrative Science Quarterly* (1956). Here, Parsons (1956) defined an organization as a "social system oriented to the attainment of relatively specific types of goals, which contributes to a major function of a more comprehensive system, usually the society itself" (p. 63). In the same issue of this journal, James Thompson (1956), writing about the task of building an administrative science, placed the major emphasis on "deductive and inductive methods . . . operational definitions . . . and measurement and evaluation" (p. 102).

Within this context, it was the responsibility of the organization scientist to work toward isolating variables, standardizing measures, and assessing causal relations within the organizational sphere. Thus, for example, Pugh, Hickson, Hinings, Turner, and Lupton (1963) proposed to analyze organizational structure in terms of six major variables; in his axiomatic theory of organization, Hage (1963) defined eight significant variables (e.g., complexity, stratification, efficiency, production effectiveness, job satisfaction) for the task. Warriner, Hall, and McKelvey (1981) have urged researchers to formulate "a standard list of operationalized, observable variables for describing organizations" (p. 173).

At the same time, this celebration of observational process makes its way both into theories of the effective organization and to the positioning of the organization scientist in the broader cultural sphere. In the former case, an array of organization theories places a strong emphasis on the necessity for the organization to systematically gather information, facts, or data for purposes of optimizing decision making. Most early theories of rational decision making, for example, were closely coupled with an emphasis on empirical fact. For instance, Frederick (1963) pointed to the necessity for linking statistical decision theory and other mathematical decision making strategies to empirical inputs. Rational decisions—whether in organizations or in science itself—are "primarily a function of available information" (p. 215). The emphasis placed on rigorous observation within the profession, and its reappearance within its theories of optimal organizational functioning, also enhances the image of the organization scientist within the culture. If observational techniques yield information essential to organizational well-being and the organization scientist is an expert in rigorous observation, then the scientist's voice is again privileged. By nature of his or her training, the scientist can be an essential aide-de-camp for the aspiring organization.

## Language as Representation

A third modernist text shapes the contours of organization science. In comparison to the stories of individual rationality and empirical knowledge, it seems of minor significance. Yet it is one that proves critical as we move to the postmodern context. The emphasis in this case is on the function of language in both science and the culture at large. John Locke (1825/1959) captures the Enlightenment view of language in his presumption that our words are "signs of internal conceptions." They stand as "marks for the ideas within [the individual's] mind whereby they might be made known to others and the thoughts to man's [sic] mind might be conveyed from one to another" (p. 106). And it is this view of language, as an outward expression of an inward mentality, that has been passed across the centuries, now to inform organization science in the modernist mold. So deeply embedded is the presumption of language as truth bearing that, until recently, it has scarcely figured in the literature of the field. Its implicit presence, however, is everywhere apparent. At the outset, as organization scientists, we treat language as the chief means by which we inform our colleagues and our culture of the results of our observations and thought. We use language to report on the nature of the world insofar as we can ascertain its character through observation. Words, in effect, are carriers of "truth" or "knowledge"—whether in journals, lectures, books, or the business consultation.

This same belief in the capacity of language to represent the real, when coupled with the belief in reason and observation, also sets the stage for modernist understanding of organizational structure and communication. The effective organization should be one in which various speciality groups generate data relevant to their particular functions (e.g., marketing, operations, human resources), the results of these efforts are channeled to the other decision-making domains, and most importantly, higher ranking executives are informed so as to make rational decisions coordinating these various efforts. In effect, the emphasis on rationality, empiricism, and language as representation favor strong divisions of labor (specialization) and hierarchy (see, e.g., the early work of Rushing, 1967, and de Grazia, 1960).

The faith in language as truth bearing, coupled with a reliance on reason and observation, also figures in the general assumption of progress in understanding organizations and, thus, of building more successful forms of future organization. If the nature of the objective world is made known through language, others can reexamine and give further thought to these propositions, the findings of this assessment are again made available for others' scrutiny, and so on; the inevitable result will be a march toward objective truth. Scientists shall acquire increasingly sophisticated knowledge about the nature of the world, be capable of increasingly precise predictions, and ultimately be able to build fully effective organizations.

In the formative years of the science, Rollin Simonds (1959) gave voice to this progressive narrative in the *Journal of the Academy of Management*:

As [the science of business administration] develops . . . there will be more and more stress on stating rather precisely cause and effect relationships and on securing empirical data to substantiate or disprove these statements. Then the results of one investigation may be integrated with another until very substantial evidence is accumulated in support of a set of scientific principles. (p. 136)

In Bell's (1974) terms, modern (postindustrial) society is "organized around knowledge for purposes of social control and the directing of innovation and change" (p. 20). Much the same view of scientific progress is projected into theories of organizational functioning. Through continued learning the organization will become increasingly adaptive and prosperous.

## THE POSTMODERN TURN

Most contemporary theory and practice in organization science is still conducted within a modernist framework. However, across many branches of the sciences and humanities—indeed, some would say across the culture more generally—a new sensibility has slowly emerged. Within the academy, this sensibility is predominantly critical, systematically dismantling the corpus of modernist assumptions and practices. Such critiques not only threaten the modernist logics but throw into question the moral and political outcomes of modernist commitments. Yet, although critique is pervasive and catalytic, it has not yet been restorative. While faulting existing traditions, it has left the future in question. How do we now proceed? The question lingers ominously in the wings. In our view, however, there lie embedded within certain forms of critique implicit logics of great potential. Criticism, too, proceeds from an assumptive base, and as its implications are explored, a vision of alternatives unfolds. In terms of positive potentials, we feel the most promising forms of critique are social constructionist in character. In what follows, we shall outline the nature of the critique and the grounds for a constructionist vision of organization science.

### From Individual to Communal Rationality

Whereas a faith in individual rationality lies somewhere toward the center of the modernist worldview, postmodern voices turn skeptical. At the extreme, the concept of individual rationality is found both conceptually flawed and oppressive in implication. Its conceptual problems are demonstrated most clearly in the case of literary and rhetorical movements (e.g., see Derrida, 1977; Norris, 1983). In major respects, these movements are pitted against the modernist assumption that rational processing lies "behind" or guides one's "outward" behavior. The site of critique in this case is language, which for the modernist furnishes the most transparent expression of individual rationality. As semioticians, literary deconstructionists, and rhetoricians propose, language is a system unto itself, a system of signifiers that both precedes and outlives the individual. Thus for one to speak as a rational agent is but to participate in a system that is already constituted; it is to borrow from the existing idioms, to appropriate forms of talk (and related action) already in place. Or more broadly put, to "do rationality" is not to exercise an obscure and interior function of "thought" but to participate in a form of cultural life. As rhetoricians add to the case, rational suasion is not thus the victory of a superior form of logic over an inferior one but results from the exercise of particular rhetorical skills and devices. In effect, there is little reason to believe that there is a specifically rational process (or logos) lurking beneath what

we take to be rational argument; to argue rationally is to "play by the rules" favored within a particular cultural tradition.

For many scholars, the implications of such arguments draw attention to the presence of broad and oppressive forces within the culture—appropriating both voice and power by claiming transcendent or culture-free rationality. Critiques of the modernist view of individual rationality are most sharply articulated in feminist (e.g., Grosz, 1988) and multicultural (e.g., West, 1988) critiques. As the critics surmise, there are hierarchies of rationality within the culture: By virtue of educational degrees, cultural background, and other such markers, certain individuals are deemed more rational (intelligent, insightful) than others and thus more worthy of leadership, position, and wealth. Interestingly, those who occupy these positions are systematically drawn from a very small sector of the population. In effect, although Enlightenment arguments have succeeded in unseating the totalitarian power of crown and cross, it is argued, they now give rise to new and more subtle structures of power and domination.

Yet postmodernist voices also enable us to move beyond critique. For when these various ideas are linked to emerging arguments in the history of science and the sociology of knowledge, an alternative view of human rationality emerges (e.g., Feyerabend, 1976; Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Kuhn, 1970; Latour & Woolgar, 1979). Consider again the system of language. Language is inherently a by-product of human interchange. There can be no "private language" (following Wittgenstein, 1963). To generate a symbol system of one's very own would essentially be autistic. Viable language, then, depends on communal cooperation—the "joint-action" (in Shotter's, 1984, terms) of two or more persons. Making sense is a communal achievement. Now if being rational is fundamentally an achievement in language (or actions consistent with a given language), as previously suggested, then rationality is inherently a form of communal participation. To speak rationally is to speak according to the conventions of a culture. Rational being is not thus individual being but culturally coordinated action (Gergen, 1994a).

### **From Empirical Method to Social Construction**

Under modernism, observational methods enjoyed an elevated status. The more sophisticated the mensural and statistical techniques, it was believed, the more reliable and well nuanced the scientific understanding of the phenomenon. From the postmodern standpoint, methodology does not itself place demands on descriptions or interpretations of data; findings do not inexorably rule between competing theories (Feyerabend, 1976; Kuhn, 1970). This is so because our understandings of phenomena are themselves theory laden, as are the methods used in their illumination. It is only when commitments are made to a given theoretical perspective (or form of language) that research can be mounted and methods selected. The a priori selection of theories thus determines in large measure the outcomes of the research—what may be said at its conclusion. To illustrate, if the organization scientist is committed to a view of the individual as a rational decision maker, then it is intelligible to mount research on information-processing heuristics, to distinguish between heuristic strategies, and to



demonstrate experimentally the conditions under which differing strategies are effective. If, in contrast, the theorist is committed to a psychoanalytic perspective and views organizational life as guided by unconscious dynamics, then issues of symbolic authority and unconscious desires become research realities. Projective devices might serve as the favored research methods. The former research would never reveal a "repressed wish," and the latter would never discover a "cognitive heuristic." Each would find the others' methods similarly specious. To speak, then, of "the organizational system," "leadership styles," or "causal effects" is to draw selectively from the immense repository of sayings (or writings) that constitute a particular cultural tradition.

The present arguments are most fully developed in social constructionist scholarship, that is, writings attempting to vivify the sociocultural processes operating to produce various "pictures" of reality—both scientific and quotidian. Social constructionist offerings are now emerging across the full emancipatory spectrum, and they single out various aspects of the taken-for-granted world—the existence of a "cold war" or a "space race" or a spectrum of the academy—including organization science (see Astley, 1985; Gergen, 1994a; Thatchenkery, 1992). Such writings are both emancipatory and expository. For example, they attempt to demonstrate the socially constructed character of the distinction between genders and the existence of mental illness or addiction. The intent is to show, in Bateson's terms, that "the map is not the territory" and thereby free us from the grip of traditional intelligibilities; they invite alternative formulations, the creation of new and different realities. In their expository role, such writings also attempt to elucidate the processes by which various rationalities and realities are created. They sensitize us to our participation in constituting our world, thus emphasizing our potential for communally organized change in understanding—and thus action.

### **Language as Social Action**

Because, for the postmodernist, language is the child of cultural process, it follows that one's descriptions of the world are not outward manifestations or projections of a mental mirror—that is, reports on one's private "observations" or "perceptions." Scientific reports are not mirrors that reflect our observations of what there is. Yet, if the modernist view of language as a picturing device is eschewed, in what manner can it be replaced? It is in the latter works of Wittgenstein that the major answer is to be located. As Wittgenstein (1963) proposed, language gains its meaning not from its mental or subjective underpinnings but from its use in action ("language games"). Or, again emphasizing the significant place of human relatedness in postmodern writings, language gains its meaning within organized forms of interaction. To "tell the truth," on this account, is not to furnish an accurate picture of "what actually happened" but to participate in a set of social conventions, a way of putting things sanctioned within a given "form of life." To "be objective" is to play by the rules of a given tradition.

More broadly, this is to say that language for the postmodernist is not a reflection of a world but is world-constituting. Language does not describe action but is itself a form of action. To do science, then, is to participate actively within a set of subcultural

relationships. As scientific narratives—for example, accounts of organizations as information systems or managers as information processors—are made known to the culture, they enter the stock of cultural intelligibilities. They shape our modes of understanding and thus our forms of conduct. To treat the organization as an information system and managers as ideally guided by a rational calculus is to favor certain forms of cultural life and to undermine or prevent others. We shall return to the implications of this view shortly.

With this relational view of language in place, modernism's presumption of the unending accumulation of knowledge is thrown into question (Lyotard, 1984). Because scientific theory is not a map of existing conditions, then research does not function to improve the accuracy of scientific accounts. Scientific research may lead to technical accomplishments, but it does not improve our descriptions and explanations of reality; descriptions and explanations are, rather, like markers by which we index our accomplishments. As research operates to displace one scientific theory with another, we are not moving ineluctably "forward" on the road to truth; we are—as many would say—simply replacing one way of putting things with another. Again, this is not to deny that scientific research enhances our capacities for certain kinds of prediction and generates new forms of technology. However, it is to question the accompanying descriptions and theoretical explanations as in any way giving an accurate picture of events.

To appreciate the positive implications of this condition, consider that traditional science strives to establish a single language. Scientific research operates to narrow the range of descriptions and explanations—to winnow out the false, the imprecise, and the inconsistent forms of language and to emerge with the single best account—that which best approximates the "objectively true." For the postmodernist, the results of this effort toward univocality are disastrous in implication. The culture is made up of a rich array of idioms, accounts, and explanations, and these various forms of talk are constitutive of cultural life. To eradicate our ways of talking about love, commitment, family, justice, values, and so on would be to undermine ways of life shared by many people. In its search for the "single best account," science operates as a powerful discrediting device—revealing the "ignorance" of the layman in one sector after another. Love is shown to be a myth, families are formed out of the requirements of "selfish genes," values are merely the result of social influence, and so on. We are invited, then, to replace the scientific emphasis on "the single best account" with a multiplicity of constructions. Or in short, totalitarianism is replaced by pluralism.

### **TOWARD A POSTMODERN ORGANIZATION SCIENCE**

As we find, postmodern critique operates as a major form of delegitimation. In the scientific sphere, it contributes to a loss of confidence in rational theory, in the safeguards of rigorous research methods, and in the promise of a steady increase in objective knowledge. As Burrell and Morgan (1979) maintain, there is a loss in the presumption of an obdurate subject matter—an object of study that is not constituted by the perspectives of investigators themselves. When translated into the sphere of

organizational life, the outcome of such arguments is a threat to long-standing assumptions of effective leadership, the scientifically managed transformation of organizations, the promise of steady growth in organizational efficacy, and the capacity of organization science to produce increments in knowledge of organizational functioning. These are indeed momentous transformations, and if current discussions continue unabated, we may soon confront a major evolution in the concept and practice of organization science.

Yet, although the vast majority of scientists and practitioners may see these emerging threats as tantamount to nihilism, in the present attempt we have also located a reconstructive theme. In particular, we have emphasized the replacement of individual rationality by communal negotiation, the importance of social processes in the observational enterprise, the socio-practical function of language, and the significance of pluralistic cultural investments in the conception of the true and the good. In short, we have derived a rough outline for a social constructionist view of the scientific effort, a view that is congenial to many of the postmodern critiques but that enables us to press beyond the critical moment.

In this final section, we turn attention to the possible contours of a positive organization science within a postmodern context. This task is informed by a range of writings that have already introduced postmodern thought into organization science—namely the *Organization Studies* series on postmodernism and organizational analysis edited by Cooper and Burrell starting in 1988. Other writers such as Clegg (1990), Gergen (1992), Thatchenkery and Upadhyaya (1996), and Boje (1995) have also made attempts to wed postmodernist thought to management discourse. And in 1992, the topic of postmodernism figured in the annual meetings of the Academy of Management (e.g., Gephart, 1992; Thatchenkery & Neilsen, 1992). These inquiries are also complemented by an impressive array of related work in organizational analysis (Calas & Smircich, 1991; Hassard, 1991; Martin, 1990), the social construction of leadership and organization (Chen & Meindl, 1992), and the language of organization theory (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). In an attempt to integrate various strands of this work, and simultaneously elaborate on the potentials of organization science in a constructionist mode, we focus on four areas of special significance: research, critique, generative theory, and organizational action.

### **The Place of Research Technologies**

Within the modernist frame, the technologies of empirical research (e.g., experimentation, simulation, attitude and opinion assessment, participant observation, trait testing, statistical evaluation) were largely used in the service of evaluating or supporting various theories or hypotheses about behavior in organizations. Under postmodernism, methodology loses its status as the chief arbiter of truth. Research technologies may produce data, but both the production and interpretation of the data must inevitably rely on forms of language (metaphysical beliefs, theoretical perspectives, conceptions of methodology) embedded within cultural relationships. Thus research fails to verify, falsify, or otherwise justify a theoretical

position outside a commitment to a range of empirically arbitrary and culturally embedded conceptualizations.

At the same time, there is nothing about postmodernism that argues against the possibilities of using empirical technologies for certain practical purposes. To be sure, there is widespread skepticism in the grand narrative of progressive science; however, there is no denying that the means by which we now do things called "transmitting information," "automating production," and "quality control" were not available in previous centuries. It is not technological capability (or "knowing how") that is called into question by postmodern critique but the truth claims placed upon the accompanying descriptions and explanations (the "knowing that"). In this sense, organization scientists should not be dissuaded by postmodernist arguments from forging ahead with methodological and technological developments. First and foremost, within certain limits, the technologies of prediction remain essential adjuncts to the organization. The prediction of team versus individual production on a particular assembly line, management turnover in a specified company, and white collar theft in a particular bureaucracy, for example, may be very useful contributions of research technology within a field of currently accepted realities. In the same way, we may continue to pursue what may be termed *technologies of sensitization*, that is means of bringing new and potentially useful ideas or practices into an organization. For example, various forms of skills and competency training, on-the-job education, values clarification, and diversity training programs may have beneficial effects from a particular organization's standpoint. Traditional research methods may very well be used to produce results that sensitize the readership to alternative modes of understanding. So long as one does not objectify terms such as *team*, *values*, *competencies*, and the like but instead remains sensitive to the parochial forms of reality that these terms sustain and to the valuational implications of such work, then such technologies are not inconsistent with most postmodern arguments.

Although postmodern critique undermines the function of research in warranting truth and shifts the empirical emphasis to more local and practical concerns, it also invites a broad expansion in the conceptualization of research. As we have seen, postmodern critique favors a constructionist view of scientific research. From this standpoint, rather than being used to buttress the theoretical forestructures of various scientific enclaves, research technologies can serve a variety of social functions. Many organization researchers have already begun to mine the potentials of this view. For over a decade, organization scholars have been exploring the intersection of research and social action (see, e.g., Brown & Tandon, 1983). Gareth Morgan (1983) has spoken of scientific research as a "process of interaction . . . designed for the realization of potentialities" (pp. 12-13). Argyris, Putnam, and Smith (1985) and Schon (1983) argued for the inextricability of research and social action. It is within this vein that action research (Torbert, 1991) operates to collapse the traditional roles of the researcher and researched to realize the potentials of local knowledge.

Yet these are not the only functions of research within a constructionist frame. Various research strategies may also be used to give voice to otherwise marginalized, misunderstood, or deprived groups. Thus far, scholars have occupied themselves

primarily with exploring the ways in which various voices are silenced. For example, Calas and Smircich (1991) have used feminist deconstructive strategies to expose rhetorical and cultural means by which the concept of leadership has been maintained as a "seductive game." Martin (1990) has looked at the suppression of gender conflicts in organizations, showing how organizational efforts to "help women" have often suppressed gender conflict and reified false dichotomies between public and private realms of endeavor. Mumby and Putnam (1992) have demonstrated the androcentric assumptions underlying Simon's concept of "bounded rationality." And Nkomo (1992) has analyzed how the organizational concept of race is embedded in a Eurocentric view of the world. Although this form of analysis is essential to a postmodern organization science, innovative practices or methodologies are also required to bring forth the marginalized voices in the organization. Practices must be developed to enable the unspoken positions to be expressed and circulated and to enter actively into decision making processes.

Finally, in the broadened conception of research, methods may be sought to generate new realities, to engender perspectives or practices as yet unrealized. Thus far, the most favorable technologies for achieving these ends take the form of dialogic methods (e.g., Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Schein, 1993). Dialogic methods often enable participants to escape the limitations of the realities that they enter and enable them, working collaboratively, to formulate modes of understanding or action that incorporate multiple inputs. As Covaleski and Dirsmith (1990) suggest, dialogic research often facilitates the generation of unforeseen relationships. Particularly promising is movement toward "appreciative inquiry" (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), practices that enable organizations to share positive stories of the past and to use these in developing together ideal forms of the future. If research is understood in its social capacities, these are but a few of its possible functions.

### **Toward Critical Reflection**

Cultural life largely revolves around the meanings assigned to various actions, events, or objects; discourse is perhaps the critical medium through which meanings are fashioned. And, because discourse exists in an open market, marked by broadly diffuse transformations (Bakhtin, 1981; Foucault, 1978), patterns of human action will also remain forever in motion—shifting at times imperceptibly and at others disjunctively. This means that the efficacy of our professional technologies of prediction, intervention, and enrichment are continuously threatened. Today's effective technology may be tomorrow's history. In this sense, prediction of organizational behavior is akin to forecasting the stock market; with each fresh current of understanding the phenomenon is altered.

In this sense, we find organization science as a generative source of meaning in cultural life. In its descriptions, explanations, technologies, and services to organizations, the science is a source of cultural meanings. And, in generating and disseminating meanings, so does the science furnish people with implements for action. Its concepts are used to justify various policies: to separate or join various groups, to judge or evaluate individuals, to define oneself or one's organization, and so on. In effect,

organization science furnishes pragmatic devices through which organizational/cultural life is carried out. From this standpoint, two vistas of professional activity become particularly salient. Here we consider ideological and social critique; we then turn to the challenge of creating new realities.

Within modernist organization science, there was little justification for moral or political evaluation of the science itself. The discipline attempted to provide value-neutral knowledge and assessments; if this knowledge was used for unethical or untoward purposes, this was not the concern of the science qua science. Yet, with the postmodern emphasis placed on the pragmatics of language, organization science can no longer extricate itself from moral and political debate. As a generator and purveyor of meanings, the field inherently operates to the benefit of certain stakeholders, activities, and forms of cultural life—and to the detriment of others. Two forms of critical analysis are especially important, as follows.

At the outset, organization science can appropriately develop a literature of self-critique. Required are debates on the cultural implications of its own constructions. With the benefit of the various intellectual movements described above, this form of self-reflection is already under way (see, e.g., Cooper & Burrell, 1988; Kilduff, 1993; Thompson, 1993). To illustrate, Boyacigiller & Adler (1991) have shown how American values regarding free will and individualism affect conceptualizations of organizational behavior. The American cultural assumption that individuals are (or should be) in control of their actions and that they can affect their immediate circumstances and can influence future outcomes, contrasts with the beliefs of many other cultures. The works of feminist scholars cited above, along with those representing various ethnic and political standpoints, also contribute valuably to critical self-reflection. Critical-emancipatory (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992) and radical humanist (Aktouf, 1992) works further extend the horizons. The postmodern transformation not only furnishes a strong warrant for such work but invites a vigorous expansion of these efforts.

Simultaneously with the appraisal of its own practices, organization science may appropriately direct its concerns to the dominant and conventional forms of organizational structure and practice. What is to be said in praise of contemporary organizational arrangements, and in what ways are they deficient? This is not simply to extend the modernist quest for the most efficient, productive, and profitable organizational structure and practices. Rather, it is to inquire into the process of "organization" as a form of cultural life. To what extent are the existing modes of human activity desirable, for whom, and in what ways? In certain degree, comparative studies of organizational life carry with them such valuative standpoints. For example, Allen, Miller, and Nath (1988) argue that in countries where individualism is highly regarded, actors tend to view their relationship with organizations strategically, whereas in collectivist cultures the individual feels more in harmony with the organization and the environment. In the American system, there is a strong belief in the power of the individual to make a difference, which is consistent with the fact that the average American CEO earns 160 times more than the average American worker, whereas in a more collectively oriented culture such as Japan, the corresponding differential is under 20 (Crystal, 1991). Although such explorations sensitize the reader to possible biases in the taken-for-

granted world of organizational life, in fact they serve as subtle criticisms of Western modes of life. As we find, however, the door is opened to far more pointed and uninhibited forms of critique—directed both to the discipline and to organizational life more generally (Hoskin & Macve, 1986; Sinclair, 1992). At the present juncture, mainstream positivist scientific training provides very few resources for such explorations. Organization science has specialized in a language of “is” rather than “ought,” a language of rational judgment as opposed to an ethics of care (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Peck, 1993). In this sense, postmodern arguments also favor a revitalization of organization science curricula.

### **The Construction of New Worlds**

One of the most significant and potentially powerful by-products of organization science is its forms of language—its images, concepts, metaphors, narratives, and the like. When placed in motion within the culture, these discourses may—if skillfully fashioned—be absorbed within ongoing relations. Such relations thereby stand to be transformed. Not only does this place a premium on reflexive critique within the profession, but it also invites the scientist to enter the process of creating realities. Within the modernist era, the organizational scientist was largely a polisher of mirrors. It was essentially his or her task to hold this mirror to nature. For the postmodernist, such a role is pale and passive. Rather than “telling it like it is,” the challenge for the postmodern scientist is to “tell it as it might become.” (See Chia [1996] on the concept of “becoming realism.”) Needed are scholars willing to be audacious, to break the barriers of common sense by offering new forms of theory, of interpretation, or intelligibility. The concept of generative theory (Gergen, 1994b) is apposite here. Such theory is designed to unseat conventional assumptions and to open new alternatives for action. Through such theorizing scholars contribute to the forms of cultural intelligibility, to the symbolic resources available to people as they carry out their lives together.

Generative theorizing is already evidenced in the steadily increasing number of contributions drawing from postmodern analytics to forge new ways of conceptualizing (and challenging) organizations themselves. In these instances, theorists typically view bureaucratic, hierarchical, and rationally controlled organizations as constituted and sustained by the particular range of modernist discourses (both in the academy and the market). As it is variously maintained, because of radical changes in the technological ethos, information intensity, economic globalization, and the like, the modernist organization is no longer viable. The new wave of postmodern and constructionist discourses are then employed as means of describing and creating what is often called the postmodern organization. Much of this work is foreshadowed in Cooper's (1989) critiques of systemic organization and on language as an active force in simultaneous processes of organization/disorganization. Useful compilations of these resources have been made by Reed and Hughes (1992) and Boje, Gephart, and Thatchenkery (1996). Importantly, this work also carries on a dialogic relationship with the marketplace and in this way acquires a constitutive capability (see, e.g., Berquist, 1993; Handy, 1994).

To illustrate, consider the sweeping moves toward globalization currently occupying the business community. From the present perspective, organization science should not strive toward a single best, most rational, and empirically grounded theory—a grand or totalizing narrative. Rather, a variety of theoretical perspectives is invited. Views of globalization as a “post-fordist model of accumulation” (Albertsen, 1988) or “flexible accumulation” (in Harvey’s, 1989, terms) should stand alongside accounts of the global organization as “post-Copernican” (Peters, 1992) in its existence within a network of collectivities. We may also strive toward new forms of articulation, as in the concept of *systase* (Gebser, 1985). In contrast to the system, the *systase* is an organization without an absolute center, around which order—as a “patchwork of language pragmatics that vibrate at all times” (Lyotard & Thebaud, 1985, p. 94)—is continually being established and threatened. At the same time, these overarching conceptualizations need supplementation by accounts at the more concrete level of action. In pursuing this line of argument, Joseph (1994) cites the evolution of a transnational nonprofit organization that went global during the 1970s. By the 1980s, it became clear that its universal model of socioeconomic-cultural development could not be applied across cultures. Needed was a reorganization, whereby each local organization autonomously pursued its own model of development. As a result the organization developed a remarkable competency to function as an international network of locally disparate organizations.

The challenge of generative theory must also be qualified in three ways. First, organization science has already produced a vast range of theory. From the postmodern perspective, these myriad formulations are not a deficit—an indication, in modernist terms, of the preparadigmatic and noncumulative character of the science. Rather, each of the existing theories represents a discourse potentially available for many purposes in a variety of contexts. Generative efforts may include, then, reinvigorating the theories of the past, redefining or recontextualizing their meanings so not to be lost from the repository of potentials.

Second, the move toward generative theory should be maximally sensitive to issues of use-value, that is, how and whether a given form of language can be absorbed into ongoing relationships. When written in an argot suitable only for highly sophisticated scholars, professional writing may be greatly circumscribed in terms of market-place utility. There is a great need, then, for the rhetorical enrichment of professional writing.

Finally, the challenge of constructing new realities is not exhausted through the scholarly and practical actions of the organization scientist alone. Under welcoming circumstances, organizational actors are fully capable of generating their own theories or “models”—accounts that can be more organically suited to their practices than the vessels of meaning supplied by the organization scientist. Although such local understandings may lack the elegance and sophistication of official theory, in terms of immediate needs they can be more valuable. However, integrating new intelligibilities into organizational life is often a difficult challenge, as illustrated by Astley and Zammuto (1992). As they reason, organization science and practice are interdependent but semiautonomous domains, each engaged in different language games. As they see it, organization scientists should be viewed not as engineers fixing problems for managers but as suppliers of conceptual and symbolic language for use in organiza-



tional settings. Required of the organization scientist, then, is an expanded means of enhancing generative interchange between the organization and the academy.

### **Organizational Action**

In certain respects, this last feature of organization science in a postmodern mode underscores and extends the preceding. Our particular concern in this case is with the organization scientist as an active agent within organizations themselves, serving, for example, as consultants, organizational participants, board members, or evaluators. In our view, it is this context in which the above emphases on the multiple functions and forms of research, critical reflexivity, and generative theorizing become most fully realized. At the same time, we view this relationship as principally dialogic, as a site not only for academic discourse and practice to percolate outward but for the discourses and practices of the organization to filter into the academy.

Rather than theorizing this relationship further, it will prove useful to explore a single case attempting to realize many of these proposals in practice. The account will help to demonstrate the potentials and limitations of the approach in an organizational setting. The action was precipitated by a "cry for help" from a large, multinational pharmaceutical company. As upper level executives described the problem, over recent decades the organization had spread into some 50 different countries. Considerable difficulty was now experienced both in communicating and coordinating actions effectively. Individuals across the various functions, and across nations, failed either to understand or appreciate each other's perspectives and decisions. Tensions were especially intense between the parent company and the subsidiaries; each tended to be mistrustful of the other's actions.

From a modernist standpoint, it would be appropriate at this juncture to launch a multifaceted research project attempting to determine precisely the origins of the problem, locating the specific individuals or conditions responsible, and, based on the results of such study, to make recommendations for an ameliorative plan of action. From a postmodern constructionist standpoint, however, there are good reasons for rejecting this option. Not only is "the problem" continuing to change while the research and intervention are being carried out, but the very idea that there is a single set of propositions that will accurately reflect the nature of the condition (or its "causal" underpinnings) is grossly misleading. Further, to warrant this interpretation with empirical data ("true" because there are "findings") and to present the interpretation as authoritative (as truth beyond perspective) is to perpetrate a bad faith relationship with the organization. Competing realities are suppressed in the name of a "scientific justification."

Given these and other problems with the modernist orientation, we first established a series of generative dialogues in which we, the consultants, served in a collaborative role.<sup>2</sup> Interviewing various managers at various levels of the organization, in both the parent company and the subsidiaries, we explored their views on various relationships within the organization. Our attempt was not to locate and define "the problem" with ever increasing accuracy but to elicit discursive resources that would enable the

managers to remove themselves from the daily discourses of relationship and to consider their situation reflexively. The hope was to loosen the sedimented realities giving rise to "the problem" and to multiply the voices they could speak within their relationships and thus the range of options for action.

Although these discussions ranged broadly, two forms of questioning were common across all: First, we asked the participants to describe instances in which communication and coordination were highly effective. Drawing from Cooperrider and Srivastva's (1987) work on appreciative inquiry, our hope was, first, to deconstruct the common sense of failure ("we have a serious problem") and, second, to secure a set of positive instances that might serve as model practices (sources of reconstruction). However, we also inquired about areas in which the managers felt there were specific problems in communication and coordination. The point here was to tap common constructions of the problematic within the organization that might be used to generate further dialogues (e.g., a rationale for "we need to talk").

The second phase of the project served to introduce conceptual resources. Given the reasoning developed above, we see theoretical discourse (when properly translated) as having catalytic potential within the field of practice. By introducing new metaphors, narratives, or images, new options for action are created. To translate the "sacred" language of the profession into secular language, we sent letters to each of the participants summarizing their comments. However, these summaries were set in the context of a set of theoretical departures drawing heavily from postmodern organization theory. The managers' accounts were used to illustrate shortcomings of the modernist organization—its hierarchies, singular logics, clear separation of boundaries, individualistic views of leadership, and the like. Further, positive cases were often linked to postmodern conceptions of organization, including, for example, participatory performance, interactive decision making, reality creation, multicultural resources, and coordinating interpretations. In effect, by instancing a set of concepts and images with ongoing practices from the organization, we hoped that the theoretical resources could be appropriated for conversational use within the organization.

In a third phase, we attempted to broaden the conversational space. That is, after securing permission from the various participants, we shared the contents of their interviews with other managers. These documents were circulated broadly in an attempt to (a) enrich the range of conversational resources available to the participants, (b) furnish a range of positive images for future use, (c) provide a range of problems that might invite further discussion, and (d) inject into the discussions a common language drawing from contemporary theorizing in the profession. We cannot ascertain at this juncture whether useful discussions are indeed occurring; further exploration is essential. And it would surely be cavalier to suppose that these various moves are sufficient for altering the corporate culture at large. At a minimum, both management training must be instituted and alterations instituted in corporate communication if significant change is to be effected. However, these various interchanges did propel into action a variety of constructionist assumptions, suggest new forms of organizational practice (technology), and foster an enrichment in organization theory—all functioning to invite new and transformative conversations.

### **Toward Catalytic Conversation**

The present offering has first isolated an interrelated set of assumptions forming an important basis for traditional organization science. By locating these assumptions within the historical context of modernism, it was also possible to consider a variety of arguments currently sweeping the academic terrain, arguments usefully viewed as postmodernist. These latter views, while placing modernist presumptions in jeopardy, also offer an alternative vision of organization science, one that places a major emphasis on processes of social construction. From this latter perspective, we outlined a rationale for what we see as a vitally expanded and enriched conception of organization science.

Yet, these views should scarcely be considered fixed and final. On the contrary, the very conception of a science in the postmodern context is one that emphasizes continuing interchange, continuing reflection and transformation. The present account is thus the beginning of a conversation rather than a termination. Not one of the present arguments is without its problems. For example, Lyotard, has criticized contemporary science for abdicating its former concern with knowledge as an end in itself. As he sees it, "knowledge is . . . produced in order to be sold, it is . . . consumed in order to be valorized in a new production. Science becomes a force of production, in other words a moment in the circulation of capital" (1984, pp. 4-5). Is the present search for the utility of a postmodern organization science not subject to the same critique? Is there a more promising alternative? There are further questions—including, for example, the implicit regime of values contained within this analysis, the possibilities of infinite regress in argumentation, and the intellectual and cultural dangers of relativism. Clearly the conversation must continue.

### **NOTES**

1. For a brief but relevant summary of these cultural underpinnings, see Gergen (1991). For more detailed accounts, see Randall (1940), Berman (1982), and Frisby (1985).
2. The consultants in this case were Kenneth and Mary Gergen.

### **REFERENCES**

- Aktouf, O. (1992). Management and theories of organizations in the 1990s: Toward a critical radical humanism? *Academy of Management Review*, 17, 407-431.
- Albertsen, N. (1988). Postmodernism, post-Fordism, and critical social theory. *Environment and Planning*, 6, 339-365.
- Allen, D. B., Miller, E. D., & Nath, R. (1988). North America. In Raghu Nath (Ed.), *Comparative management* (pp. 23-54). Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Alvesson, M., & Willmott, H. (1992). On the idea of emancipation in management and organization studies. *The Academy of Management Review*, 17, 432-464.
- Argyris, C., Putnam, R., & Smith, D. (1985). *Action science*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ashley, D. (1990). Postmodernism and the end of the individual. *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, 10, 195-221.

- Astley, G. (1985). Administrative science as socially constructed truth. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 30, 497-513.
- Astley, G., & Zammuto, R. (1992). Organization science, managers, and language games. *Organization Science*, 3, 443-460.
- Ayer, A. J. (1940). *The foundation of empirical knowledge*. New York: Macmillan.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bell, D. (1974). *The coming of post-industrial society*. London: Heinemann.
- Berman, M. (1982). *All that's solid melts into air: The experience of modernity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Berquist, W. (1993). *The postmodern organization*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Boje, D. M. (1995). Stories of the storytelling organization: A postmodern analysis of Disney as "Tamaraland." *Academy of Management Journal*, 38, 997-1035.
- Boje, D., Gephart, R., & Thatchenkery, T. (Eds.). (1996). *Postmodern management and organization theory*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Boyacigiller, N., & Adler, N. (1991). The parochial dinosaur: Organizational science in a global context. *The Academy of Management Review*, 16, 262-290.
- Brown, D., & Tandon, R. (1983). Ideology and political economy in inquiry: Action research and participatory research. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 19, 277-294.
- Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Calas, M., & Smircich, L. (1991). Voicing seduction to silence leadership. *Organization Studies*, 12, 567-602.
- Chen, C., & Meindl, J. (1992). The construction of leadership images in the popular press. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36, 521-551.
- Chia, R. (1996). From modern to postmodern organizational analysis. *Organizational Studies*, 16(4), 579-604.
- Clark, P., & Wilson, J. (1961). Incentive systems: A theory of organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 6, 129-166.
- Clegg, S. (1990). *Modern organizations: Organization studies in the postmodern world*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Cooper, R. (1989). Modernism, postmodernism, and organizational analysis 3: The contribution of Jacques Derrida. *Organization Studies*, 10(4), 479-502.
- Cooper, R., & Burrell, G. (1988). Modernism, postmodernism and organizational analysis: An introduction, Part 1. *Organization Studies*, 9, 91-112.
- Cooperrider, D., & Srivastva, S. (1987). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, 1, 129-169.
- Covaleski, M., & Dirsmith, M. (1990). Dialectic tension, double reflexivity and the everyday accounting researcher. *Accounting, Organizations & Society*, 15, 543-573.
- Crystal, G. (1991). *In search of excess: The overcompensation of American executives*. New York: Norton.
- de Grazia, A. (1960). The sciences and values of administration. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 5, 421-447.
- de Man, P. (1986). *The resistance to theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, J. (1977). *Of grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Feyerabend, P. (1976). *Against method*. New York: Humanities Press.
- Eastman, W. N., & Bailey, J. R. (1994). Examining the origin of management theory: Value divisions in the positivist program. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 30, 313-328.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality, Vol. 1: An introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Pantheon.
- Frascina, F., & Harrison, C. (Eds.). (1982). *Modern art and modernism*. London: Open University Press.
- Frederick, W. (1963). The next development in management science: A general theory. *Academy of Management Journal*, 6, 212-219.
- Frisby, D. (1985). *Fragments of modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.
- Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. New York: Free Press.

- Gebser, J. (1985). *The ever-present origin*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Gergen, K. J. (1991). *The saturated self*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gergen, K. J. (1992). Organization theory in the postmodern era. In M. Reed & M. Hughes. (Eds.), *Rethinking organization* (pp. 207-226). London: Sage.
- Gergen, K. J. (1994a). *Realities and relationships*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gergen, K. J. (1994b). *Toward transformation in social knowledge* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Gephart, R. P. (1992). *Environmental disasters in the postmodern era*. Presented at the National Academy of Management Meetings, Las Vegas, NV.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *Consequences of modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Grosz, E. (1988). The in(ter)vention of feminist knowledge. In B. Caine, E. Grosz, & M. de Lpevanche (Eds.), *Crossing boundaries*. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Hackman, R., & Lawler, E. (1971). Employee reactions to job characteristics. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60, 159-170.
- Hage, J. (1963). An axiomatic theory of organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 10, 289-320.
- Haire, M. (Ed.). (1959). *Modern organization theory*. New York: Wiley.
- Handy, C. (1994). *The age of paradox*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity: An inquiry into the origins of cultural change*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Hassard, J. (1991). Multiple paradigms and organizational analysis: A case study. *Organization Studies*, 12, 275-299.
- Hoskin, K. W., & Macve, R. (1986). Accounting and the examination: A genealogy of disciplinary power. *Accounting, Organization and Society*, 11, 105-136.
- House, R. (1971). A path goal theory of leadership effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 16, 321-338.
- Jameson, F. (1984). Postmodernism, or the cultural logic late capitalism. *New Left Review*, 146, 53-92.
- Joseph, T. (1994). *Hermeneutic processes in organizations*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH.
- Kilduff, M. (1993). Deconstructing organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 18, 13-31.
- Knorr-Cetina, K. D. (1981). *The manufacture of knowledge*. Oxford, UK: Pergamon.
- Kuhn, T. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Latour, B., & Woolgar, S. (1979). *Laboratory life, the social construction of scientific facts*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lawrence, P. R., & Lorsch, J. (1967). *Organization and environment*. Cambridge: Harvard School of Business.
- Levenson, M. (1984). *A genealogy of modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lobel, S. A. (1990). Global leadership competencies: Managing to a different drumbeat. *Human Resource Management*, 29, 39-47.
- Locke, E. A. (1968). Toward a theory of task motivation and incentives. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 3, 157-189.
- Locke, J. (1825/1959). *An essay concerning human understanding*. New York: Dover.
- Luhmann, N. (1976). A general theory of organized social systems. In G. Hofstede & S. Kassem (Eds.), *European contributions of organization theory* (pp. 96-113). Amsterdam: Van Gocum.
- Liotard, J. (1984). *The postmodern condition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Liotard, J., & Thebaud, J. (1985). *Just gaming*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Marcus, G. E., & Fisher, M. (1986). *Anthropology as cultural critique: An experimental moment in the human sciences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Martin, J. (1990). Deconstructing organizational taboos: The suppression of gender conflict in organizations. *Organizational Science*, 1, 339-359.
- McKibben, B. (1989). *The end of nature*. New York: Random House.
- Morgan, G. (Ed.). (1983). *Beyond method*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Mumby, D. K., & Putnam, L. (1992). The politics of emotions: A feminist reading of bounded rationality. *The Academy of Management Review*, 17, 465-486.
- Nkomo, S. (1992). The emperor has no clothes: Rewriting race in organizations. *The Academy of Management Review*, 17, 487-513.

- Norris, C. (1983). *The deconstructive turn*. London: Methuen.
- Parker, I., & Shotter, J. (Eds.). (1990). *Deconstructing social psychology*. New York: Routledge.
- Parsons, T. (1956). Suggestions for a sociological approach to the theory of organizations—1. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1, 63-85.
- Peck, S. (1993). *A world waiting to be born*. New York: Bantam.
- Peters, T. (1992). *Liberation management*. New York: Knopf.
- Pfohl, S. (1992). *Death at the Parasite Cafe*. New York: St. Martin's.
- Pugh, D. S., Hickson, D. J., Hinings, C. R., Turner, C., & Lupton, T. (1963). A conceptual scheme of organizational analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 8, 289-315.
- Randall, J. H. (1940). *The making of the modern mind*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Reed, M., & Hughes, M. (Eds.). (1992). *Rethinking organization*. London: Sage.
- Rorty, R. (1979). *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rushing, W. (1967). The effects of industry size and division of labor on administration. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 12, 273-295.
- Schein, E. (1993). On dialogue, culture, and organizational learning. *Organizational Dynamics*, 22, 40-51.
- Schon, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.
- Shafritz, J. M., & Ott, S. (1987). *Classics of organization theory*. Chicago, IL: Dorsey.
- Shotter, J. (1984). *Social accountability and selfhood*. New York: Blackwell.
- Simon, H. (1957). *Administrative behavior* (2nd ed.). New York: Macmillan.
- Simonds, R. H. (1959). Toward a science of business administration. *The Journal of the Academy of the Management*, 2, 135-138.
- Sinclair, A. (1992). The tyranny of a team ideology. *Organization Studies*, 13, 611-626.
- Thatchenkery, T. (1992). Organizations as texts: Hermeneutics as a model for understanding organizational change. *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, 6, 197-233.
- Thatchenkery, T., & Neilsen, E. (1992). Postmodernist "readings" of managerial abilities, learning organizations, and information systems. Symposium presented at the National Academy of Management Meetings, Las Vegas.
- Thatchenkery, T., & Upadhyaya, P. (1996). Organizations as a play of multiple and dynamic discourses. In D. Boje, R. Gephart, & T. Thatchenkery (Eds.), *Postmodern management and organization theory* (pp. 308-330). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Thompson, A., & Strickland, A. J. (1992). *Strategic management*. Homewood, IL: Irwin.
- Thompson, C. J. (1993). Modern truth and postmodern incredulity. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 10, 332-338.
- Thompson, J. D. (1956). On building an administrative science. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1, 102-111.
- Torbert, W. R. (1991). *The power of balance: Transforming self, society, and scientific inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and motivation*. New York: Wiley.
- Warriner, C. K., Hall, R., & McKelvey, B. (1981). The comparative description of organizations. *Organization Studies*, 2, 173-175.
- West, C. (1988). Marxist theory in the specificity of Afro-American oppression. In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1963). *Philosophical investigations*. New York: Macmillan.
- Wolf, W. (1958). Organizational constructs: An approach to understanding organizations. *The Journal of the Academy of Management*, 1, 7-15.