

## Accounting for *Organization*: Round-up the usual suspects

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### Abstract

Over the last 15 years, critical organization theorists have increasingly adopted postmodernist perspectives. The setting-up of *Organization* by a group of “radical organization theorists” provided an outlet for a network of authors who considered “conventional” management journals restricted their thinking and writing. Since the first issue in 1994, *Organization* has become established as an important outlet for scholars from a wide range of countries. This diversity is combined with a concentration of authors associated with five universities, Warwick, UMIST, Lancaster, Keele (UK) and Massachusetts Amherst (US) who account for more than 27% of all publications during the first 8 years. We use the concepts of “solidarity group” and “invisible college” [de Solla Price DJ. *Science since Babylon*. New Haven: Yale University Press; 1961; de Solla Price DJ. *Little science, big science*. New York: Columbia University Press; 1963; de Solla Price DJ, Beaver D. *Collaboration in an invisible college*. *Am Psychol* 1966;21:1011–8; Crane D. *Invisible colleges: diffusion of knowledge in scientific communities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1972] as the basis for a critical analysis of this network of authors many of whom are linked to the journal’s editorial board. We also offer a critique of the bureaucratic nature of the journal’s *Organizational* structure that, we suggest, contradicts the principles underpinning postmodernism. For example, Cooper and Burrell distinguish between the modernist “control” model and the “autonomy” model that approximates to the postmodernist perspective.

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The final scene in *Casablanca* (1947) starring Bogart and Bergman includes the following exchange:

Rick and Louis Renault (Prefect of Police in Casablanca) watch Laslo and Ilsa board the plane which will take them to freedom. As the plane taxis for take-off, a speeding car comes to a halt outside the hangar and a German officer, Major Strasser, runs towards Rick and Renault. Strasser while attempting to summon help via the telephone draws his pistol and shoots at Rick. The bullet misses and Rick shoots Strasser who crumples to the ground. Immediately, four gendarmes arrive in a police car, their leader hurriedly salutes Renault, and the following exchange takes place:

Gendarme: Mon Capitaine!

Renault: Major Strasser's been shot.

[Renault pauses and looks at Rick. Rick returns Renault's gaze with expressionless eyes.]

Renault: Round up the usual suspects.

Gendarme: Oui mon Capitaine.

As the film ends, Renault says to Rick "I think this may be the beginning of a beautiful friendship" and they walk off together into the night (fade out).

## 1. Introduction

The first edition of *Organization* was published early in 1994 and in the intervening period has become established as a leading journal in the area of organisation studies. The journal is notable for attracting authors from a geographic area well beyond the usual confines of western Europe and north America. The innovative approach of the editors encourages publication of short themed pieces as well as conventional journal articles. As we discuss below, the original editorial team (editors, Burrell and Reed; co-editors, Alvesson, Calas and Smircich) claim they were motivated by a desire to found a "neo-disciplinary organisation studies relevant to the 21st century". Although Mike Reed is a "critical realist" [see Reed (1997) for a critique of "the postmodernist turn in organizational analysis"] the influence of French poststructural thinkers (Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard) is a defining feature of the journal. For example, Burrell (1996, p. 652) discusses the response to his submission of paper on Foucault from *Administrative Science Quarterly*:

"I treasure its referees' comments to this day, for all three questioned the relevance of 'an unknown French philosopher' and asked 'what could an American audience learn' from such thought".

While the term postmodernism covers a "wide pallet of competing positions" (Hassard and Keleman, 2002, p. 346), one consistent theme is the centrality of power to the production and consumption of knowledge. Therefore, our aim in writing this paper is to provide an

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