Chapter 87
Innovation Through Diversity:
We Aren't Post-Politics

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ABSTRACT

Organizations operating on a global scale encounter much pressure to be innovative in order to survive. For many, embracing diversity is a means of enhancing creativity, and thus, success. A common organizational strategy to harness diversity is through structures and cultures that organizational scholars would identify as post-modern alternatives to traditional, tall bureaucracies. While such organizations claim that these structures and cultures cater to diversity, particularly gendered diversity, they can often operate to mitigate gendered equality. This occurs because organizations, despite their best intentions and efforts, reinscribe masculine norms of working and organizing. This chapter examines two highly recognizable technology organizations, Google and Facebook, and closely attends to the ways in which their structures and cultures privilege masculinity.

INTRODUCTION

Within the era of globalization, organizations face many challenges. Organizations must be adaptive, flexible, and responsive to external environments. To meet the demands of globalization, organizations often depart from the traditional elements of bureaucracy, instead, incorporating more postmodern alternatives. With these waves of change, organizations must also manage the need for innovation and increasingly diverse populations. For many organizations, diversity is directly tied to innovation, thus, theoretically, the more diverse an organization the greater the likelihood of creativity and innovation.

This chapter attends to the intersections of organizational structure, culture, innovation, and gendered diversity. The central argument asserts that postmodern organizational structures and cultures are not necessarily liberatory environments as they can reinforce dominant norms of masculinity. While postmodern organizations trend toward collaboration, fluidity, and flat hierarchies, they are also sites of power and control. As such, postmodern organizations, while often celebrated by academics and the popular press alike, can undermine their diversity efforts through the same structures and cultures that purport

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to mitigate inequality. I offer two case studies focusing upon well-known organizations in the technology industry, Google and Facebook. I attend to the potential benefits these structures carry in terms of innovation and diversity yet problematize how these environments recreate masculine norms and ideals.

In the pages that follow, I offer that all facets of organizations are intricate negotiations of power, including organizational structures. I then discuss the characteristics of traditional bureaucratic structures and alternative structures, unpacking their philosophical, ideological, and material consequences. I then situate the technology industry and turn to two case studies, examining these organizations' use of more alternative structures. In sum, I offer an analysis of the ways these organizations negotiate the intersections of organizational structure, difference and diversity, and innovation. Ultimately, I argue that the very mechanisms used by these organizations to increase gender and sex diversity actually eclipse both women and femininity.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND POWER

A multitude of scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds have extensively reported on the ways in which organizations serve as significant sites of power (DuGay, 2007; Heelas, 2002; Ross, 2003). Such perspectives are heavily rooted in critical theory and offer examinations of power, control, and ideology as they operate in and around organizational life. Following a critical organizational trajectory, all aspects of an organization carry the capacity to exercise disciplinary measures with organizational structure serving as no exception.

Before proceeding, a basic definition of structure and its import is necessary. Put simply, structure is the arrangement of different components of an entity. Everything has structure regardless of its degree of materiality or abstractness. For example, human beings, thought, bridges, cells, and conversations each have structure even though the arrangements of such structures are remarkably different. While structures are certainly fluid and moldable, our ideas of what structure is, can, and should be greatly influenced by social and cultural elements. Take time as an example. Over the course of several centuries, the Western framework of 24-hour days, seven-day weeks, and 365-day years emerged, largely due to the drive to synchronize railroad schedules and condition newly minted employees to life in the factory. While this structuring of time may seem self-evident for many, the 24/7/365 framework is far from given or innate. Rather, the Western structure of time is a social construct. Evidence abounds when we consider differing organizations of time. Consider Jamaica Kincaid's (2000) work about the colonization of Antigua in which she addresses relationships with time on behalf of the colonizer and the colonized. Kincaid recognizes the extreme importance bound within the ability of naming and organizing time. She states, "... and what a great part the invention of the wristwatch played in it, for there was nothing noble-minded men could not do when they discovered they could slap time on their wrists..." (2000, p. 10). The capacity to name time offers the facility to organize realities, not only for oneself, but for those subject to the constructs. The point here is to recognize that all entities have structure, structures are ideological, and structures have implications for the people and cultures embedded within them.

Organizations are structured social entities that coordinate human action, thought, and behavior. As Stohl and Cheney assert, "Structure is the architect of organized participation. It is composed of rules, regulations, resources, guidelines, and procedures" (2001, p. 359). In a sense, structure is how an organization is organized. However, to reiterate the above points, organizational structure is neither given nor self-evident. While upon first glance organizational structure may appear neutral, as human

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