Alvesson describes his own book as an impossible mission. A reading of the book persuades the reader that this is an accurate judgement. The attempt to synthesise postmodern theory with social research is clearly an ambitious objective. It is this objective that Alvesson attempts to achieve within this text. He fails by his own admission.

The reflexive re-evaluation of social research is the central theme of the book. The writer reluctantly – often vehemently undermining the label – adopts a postmodern perspective in order to re-focalise social research. The outcome of this discussion appears to propose the concept of a more self-aware approach to social research. This is a generalised outcome that cannot fail to improve any form of research. However, the reader is left considering if the involvement of postmodern theory is required for this outcome to be reached. Ideally any form of evaluation or critique of social research should incorporate an analysis of the self-awareness of the research and its interpretations.

The problem for Alvesson, and for any understanding of postmodernism, is the fluid and protean nature of postmodernism. Alvesson is aware of this problem and is careful to detail it in the beginning chapters of this book.

The book is structured to include nine chapters; the contents of each are too thorough to detail within this short review so I shall give a brief overview. The opening chapters are concerned with the context, definition and problematic nature of postmodernism. The following chapters then offer insights into specific methodologies and offer intimations of future postmodern directions. The book is concluded with a specific re-evaluation of the writers own research piece from a postmodern perspective. This gives a useful insight into the practical implications of the previous chapters. Finally the conclusion section attempts to crystallize the arguments for a postmodern reconsideration of social research.

The structure described above combined with the book’s repetitive nature and its short clearly headed subsections, suggests that it has been written for reference purposes rather than cover-to-cover reading. The text seems to be designed as a kind of social research companion. The ease of access to specifically required research information is a highlight of this text.

The objective of this book is to attempt to unite or find some common ground between postmodernism and social research. In my opinion, the book achieves the opposite. As the synthesising exercise is attempted the incompatibility of postmodernism and social research becomes more obvious. This is not a criticism of the writer; it is because of the thoroughness of the writing that the differential gap is widened. As the writer analyses the research processes the clarity of the definition of postmodernism disappears. The compromise required to fit postmodernism into a form of social research hollows out the original concept. The conclusion section attempts to smooth over these problems and it is for this reason that we are left with the suggestion of a reflexive re-evaluation of social research as opposed to a radical reworking.

This is a highly self-critical and pragmatic text that will prove useful for researchers who wish to reconsider their approach from a postmodern position. However, inevitably, it is not a text that can give any form of consolidated postmodern social research. This text describes the process of a social researcher adapting to postmodern theory, not a postmodern theorist adopting social research practices.

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References

Mats Alvesson, Prof. Alan Bryman. *What is postmodernism?* *How can it be used to develop social research?* *How can we do social research in more creative ways?* This book integrates philosophical and theoretical ideas with fieldwork and supports the development of research methods with a sharper interpretive and self-critical edge. It provides an overview of postmodern themes, evaluates the possibilities and dangers of postmodernist thinking and develops ideas on how a selective, sceptical incorporation of postmodernism can make social research more conscious about problems and pitfalls, and Postmodernism and Social Research book. Read reviews from worldâ€™s largest community for readers. This book provides an overview of postmodern themes, eva...Â One chapter addresses the research interview in the light of postmodernist concerns about the naivety of assuming that the interviewee is simply an informant, a truth-teller authentically expressing his or her experiences and meaning. Other chapters address issues of voice, interpretation, writing and reflexivity. The book includes a range of empirical illustrations of how postmodernist ideas can inspire social research, and in all it represents a valuable text for students and researchers alike. ...more. Get A Copy. Kindle Store. Postmodernism is an intellectual movement that became popular in the 1980s, and the ideas associated with it can be seen as a response to the social changes occurring with the shift from modernity to postmodernity. Postmodernists claim that the classic social thinkers took their inspiration from the idea that history has a shape - itâ€™sÂ A level sociology revision â€“ education, families, research methods, crime and deviance and more! Search for: Search.