

Core Notions

- Finding the meaning of events
- · Interpreting actions
- Learning and awareness of learning
- Reality and socially constructed reality
- The effect of the observer on what is observed
- Making action contingent on situation

- There are many possible meanings and interpretation of the same actions and event.
- Often the way we set about investigating events determines what we will find.
- In some situations we want to take control of the way we choose interpretations.

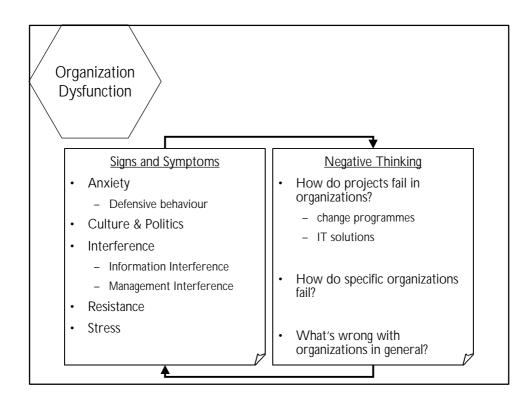


Simplistic Critique

- All organizations are corrupt, exploitative, inefficient, inflexible, ...
- All managers are manipulative, overpaid, prejudiced, unimaginative, ...
- All workers are cynical, lazy, stupid, underpaid, ...

BUT

- Such a simplistic critique provides no basis for
 - understanding differences between organizations
 - planning and implementing improvements
 - understanding problems and designing solutions



Organization Ideal versus Reality Source: Howard Schwartz, Narcissistic Process and Organization Decay

Clockwork

- Everyone knows what the organization is all about, and is concerned solely with carrying out its mission
- People are basically happy in their work
- Level of anxiety is low
- People interact and cooperate without friction. Mutual support.
- Management problems are easily solved with proper skills and correct techniques.

Snakepit

- Everything is always falling apart. Your first concern is to make sure it doesn't fall on you.
- Nobody really knows what is going on. But everyone wants to know, because there is danger in not knowing.
- · Anxiety and stress are constant companions.
- People deal with one another with little pleasure and considerable suspicion.
- Management problems are intractable.
 Managers feel they've done well if they can make it through the day.

Different styles for different times

Football team

- During team practice
 - Try out new moves, develop new skills
 - Discuss tactics
 - Work out weaknesses
- · During cup final
 - Play to your strengths
 - Avoid weak areas

Armed forces

- In peacetime
 - Develop new technology and skills
 - Train soldiers
 - Debate strategic options
- During operations
 - Use existing technology
 - Follow orders

Business and Organizations

http://www.veryard.com/orgmgt/student.htm

Different styles for different situations

Internet Start-Up

- Rapid Response
- · Low Capital
- · Zero Backlog

Power-Generation Plant

- · Long-Term Projects
- High Capital Investment
- Slow Response

Government Department

- · Large number of citizens
- Strong political pressures
- · Complex bureaucracy

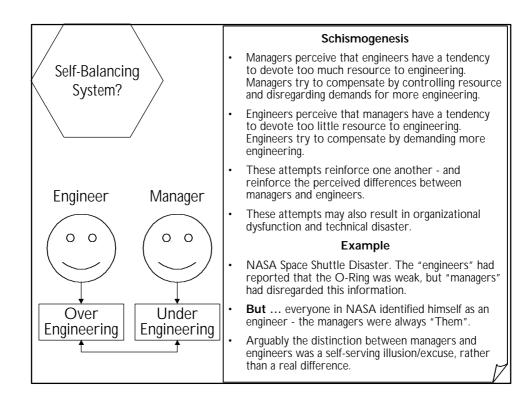
Health Research Charity

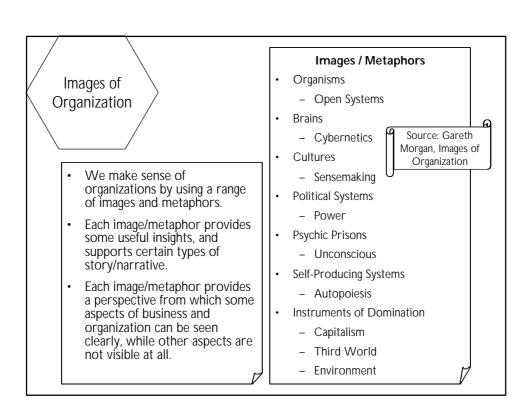
- Short-term fund-raising
- Long-term research projects

Perceived Cuts and Divisions

- Organizations may appear to be composed of different groups and cultures
 - Managers / Engineers / Workers
 - Staff / Line
 - Business / IT / Users
 - Employees / Contractors
 - Professional / Administration
- Perceived divisions often don't correspond to the formal structure.
- Perceived divisions are subjective different people draw them differently

- Them / Us
- Projection
 - We project good or bad qualities onto the "Other". In other words, we act according to the belief that the Other possesses/ lacks certain qualities.
 - For example, we expect managers to have "leadership" qualities.
 - IT people often expect users to be lacking in certain qualities.





Story types

Themes

- Beginning
- · Passages
- Knots
- Trees
- Trickster
- Healing
- Return

Uses

- Wisdom about change
- · Connections to human issues
- · Regaining direction
- Overcoming fragmentation

Uncertainty & Causal Mechanisms

Explanation using Mechanisms

- The social sciences don't always follow simple laws and generalizations.
 - Reliable prediction is impossible.
- Explanation in the social sciences depends on the identification of causal mechanisms.
 - A mechanism is a frequently occurring and easily recognizable causal pattern.

Three Types of Uncertainty

- Uncertain exactly what conditions may trigger the mechanism.
- The same mechanism may have several possible outcomes.
 - For example, different people may defend themselves against attack in different ways.
- Sometimes two or more opposing mechanisms may interact in indeterminate ways.

Totem and Taboo

Totem

 Something that is given an elevated importance in an organization.

Taboo

- Something that cannot be discussed, is not a valid reason or explanation for anything.
- Each organization has its totems and taboos. These are aspects of organizational culture, which can be studied anthropologically.
- Often the same element may be totem in one organization and taboo in another organization. This can result in cultural difficulties in the relationship.

Relationship between Individual & Organization

Unitary

- Interests
 - Places emphasis on the achievement of common objectives.
- · Conflict
 - Regards conflict as a rare and transient phenomenon.
- Power
 - Largely ignores the role of power in organizational life.

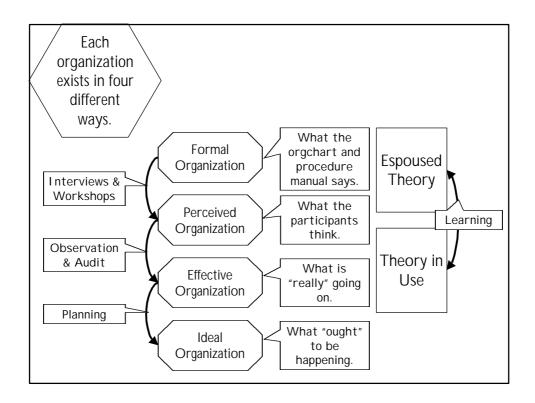
Pluralist

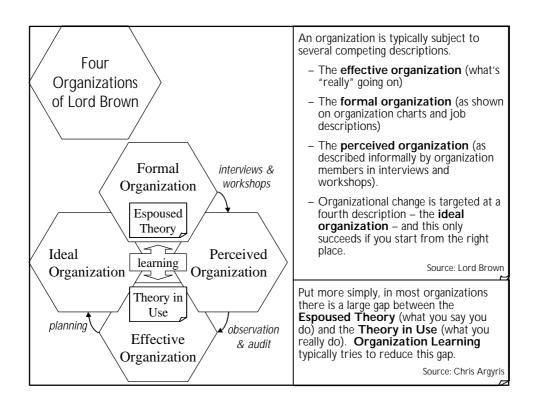
- Interests
 - Places emphasis on the diversity of individual and group interests.
- Conflict
 - Regards conflict as permanent feature of organizations.
- Power
 - Regards power as a crucial variable.

Radical

Source: Morgan

- Interests
 - Places emphasis on opposition.
- Conflict
 - Regards conflict as inevitable, leading ultimately to structural change.
- Power
 - Regards unequal distribution of power as key feature.





Social reality

- Perception Many things that we take for physical perception are culturally mediated. E.g. Spectrum colours
- Reification Many things we take to be things with intrinsic properties are socially constructed. E.g. money
- Persistence Many things that we take to be permanent features of our world can disappear almost overnight. E.g. Railtrack
- Leadership Many people who seem to be born leaders with real stature can turn out to have feet of clay when followership falters. E.g. football managers
- Agreement Deals done between disparate cultural groups usually turn out to have gaping holes in them. E.g. Sellafield processing for Japanese
- Hysteria Social reality is prone to extreme swings of opinion around emotive subjects. E.g. Dangerous dogs act
- **Preconception** We see things we are culturally conditioned to expect.
- Culture Culture is a label for particular constellations of social reality.

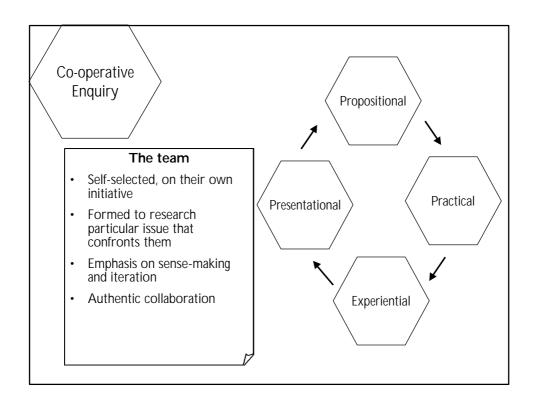
Learning

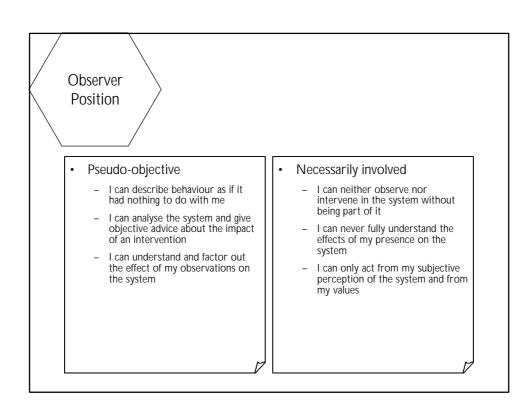
Single loop

- Based on shared reality
- Simple control feedback
- Results in behavioural skill
- Training model
- "What I need to do is obvious and I just need to practice to do it better"

Double loop

- · Changes "theory in use"
- Complex control feedback
- · Results in understanding of system
- Learning model
- "I don't think the way I am doing this produces the effects I want or expect, I'd better change something"





Questions to ponder

- You observe an organisation at work, but when you report your observations people inside the organisation disagree. Think of at least five reasons why this might happen.
- To what degree are the measures used to assess productivity or workers socially constructed? What effect does this have on the usefulness of these measures?
- You can see that what someone says they are doing is very different from how they are acting. How could you communicate this gap?

Sample Exam Questions

• There is a story that the architect Christopher Wren was touring the site where work was in progress for the construction of St Paul's Cathedral. Coming upon three men who were all engaged in the same task, he asked each of them what they were doing. The first said: "I'm laying bricks." The second said: "I'm just earning my wages." The third said: "I'm helping to build a great cathedral." Discuss this story, with reference to the theory and practice of organizational behaviour.

