Notework

The Newsletter of the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism

May 2001 issue

Editorial
Jo Brewis

Welcome to the May 2001 issue of Notework, which I am horrified to report represents my sixth as editor. Still, you wouldn't be without my creativity and sparkling wit, now would you? I'm sure there are very few people out there who would put a shamrock on the cover of a newsletter published in advance of a conference in Dublin … Apart from that special touch of editorial magic, and others like it, this issue contains Steve's Notes from the Chair, minutes from the last Board meeting in Dublin, a review of Margaret Somerville's *The Ethical Canary* by Michael Booth, some reflections on her move from a Business School to a Development Studies Institute by Elisabeth Wilson, John Bergin's `On organizational abuse', some info about the recent acquisition of Gordon and Breach (who publish *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies*) by Taylor and Francis from Gerard Greenway and general daftness courtesy of Peter Case, Piers Myers and Jim McDonald. Plus there is also the call for SCOS 2002, to be held in Budapest and themed simply `Speed'… what more could you want?

Something else to note is that the conference web site is now up and running and can be accessed directly at http://www.scos.org/conference2001/index.htm or via this link: It contains loads of useful information like a reminder of the call for papers, a list of papers received to date and an overview of their subject matter, confirmed plenary speakers, information about the social events and submission and registration details. In the meantime if there are areas of interest or concern not covered by the website please do contact John Bergin direct at J.P.Bergin@wlv.ac.uk – bearing in mind in all correspondence the theme of this year's conference, of course! John also tells me that he is still potentially open for business in terms of accepting abstracts, but he asks you if you would please consult him before you submit!.

Quite apart from all of that, this is the first issue of Notework to be published only on the SCOS web site. As noted in the November 2000 edition this will now apply to all May issues, although the November Notework will continue to be distributed in hard copy as well as being posted on the web. I guess if you are reading this then you will have already accessed the web site, joined SCOS, and obtained a membership id number and password so that you can bypass the site's firewall to access this issue. So it would be pointless telling you how to do it all, wouldn't it … ?????? **But** if you are reading over your friend's shoulder, like what you see and fancy joining (it's free) then here's the link to the online membership form: http://www.scos.org/index1.htm

If you haven't already, you might also want to join our listserver, by sending the following message to jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk:

join scos first name last name

so I would send the message:

join SCOS Jo Brewis

NB leave the "Subject" field in your message blank
NB 2 please note the new host for the list, which was formerly hosted by Mailbase

Please also spread the word about SCOS to anyone you think might be interested.

Anyway, enough already … heartfelt thanks are due to everyone who has made this issue possible through their contributions – it's really appreciated. I'd also like to make my usual plea to you all to keep it coming … my contact details are shown below, and the deadline for the next issue is **September 15th 2001.**

May the road rise with you …

Jo

Editor's contact details

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Students walk through the courtyard of the 18th century Trinity College in Dublin, where this year's SCOS conference will be held. Established in 1591 by Elizabeth 1 as a Protestant institution, to be one of a number of colleges of the University of Dublin, it remained mainly so until 1996 when entrance rules were changed. The other colleges were never built.

Local preparations are already well in hand for the reception of SCOS conference early arrivals….

Notes from the Chair
Stephen Linstead

Well, it's a different chair this time – one in the South-East of England rather than the North-East following a path already well trodden by your editor. Membership via the SCOS site continues to increase – now up to over 300 – but we have room for many more. The other good news is that material for the next issue is already in hand and is almost full – so get your contribution in if you want to be part of it.

It is now almost official – **Studies in Cultures Organizations and Societies** will become **Culture and Organization** beginning with volume 8 (2002) and will move to ... wait for it.. FOUR yes FOUR issues a year. Heather Höpfl and myself will be overall joint editors with especial responsibility for contributions from Europe Jean Mills will have responsibility for developing the Americas and Robert Westwood for developing the Asia-Pacific. This is a clear indication that Taylor and Francis are backing the journal to become THE major outlet for the best qualitative work in the multi-disciplinary field of qualitative organization studies. There will be a relaunch under the new title and a blaze of publicity, with revisions to the mission and the editorial board already under way. We will be making a drive for increasing submissions and the opportunities for good quality papers presented at the annual conference to be published in the journal will of course be considerably increased. NOW would be a good time to begin considering the journal as an outlet as we move towards these new exciting developments. Contributions for the forthcoming special issue of the journal from the Athens conference are now out with reviewers – Alison Pullen and Tony O'Shea having accepted the role of guest editors for the project.

Latest (stop press) news from Dublin is that confirmed plenary speakers include Dr. Marina Barnard (**Violence on the Streets**) and Charles Taylor ; and over 70 papers have been accepted Social events include the Dublin Writers Museum, and dinner in the celebrated King Sitric restaurant in the beautiful fishing port of Howth.

Plans are well advanced for Budapest with some really imaginative events planned – George Ritzer (**The McDonaldization of Society; Enchanting a Disenchanted World**) has confirmed as a plenary speaker .... Start making your travel plans now. See the call for papers in this issue.

The board have just returned from scouting a site for a future conference in historic **Alicante** on Spain's beautiful Costa Blanca – superb hotel in a stunning setting between beach and marina, great rooms, friendly staff, with a local university close at hand.. possible themes include the idea of wellness ...so watch this space.

The search goes on for a successor to me in the Chair, as I won't be able to continue once I take over the journal - too much power in one individual's hands, they reckon... so if you have any suggestions please let any member of the board know, especially the elections officer. The board have been discussing responses to the survey of members of late, and we hope to have some concrete suggestions by the next issue. However, the new regional structure, which is intended to be empowering, should encourage people to initiate local events, and any help or advice, or publicity SCOS can give, including giving your event the title of SCOS Workshop or similar, ask us.

Also if you have a book out you'd like to tell people about, a conference coming up, a journal you've launched, a project you need to network on, or anything you feel you might benefit from sharing with the rest of the members why not use **Notework** To do it? A great book you've just read? Share it with us.

Finally, for those into the symbolic and absurd, a couple of weeks ago Alison and I went to the European Rugby Union Cup Final in Paris to support our local side, Leicester Tigers, who eventually won in an almost terminally exciting game. We discovered that, in the midst of an exceptionally good-humoured warm up to the match, we had been photographed twice enjoying the local beer and both photographs appeared in the local paper - which is of course sufficient to make anyone's reputation.... I am currently negotiating for the negatives. Three separate people tripped on their way up the stadium steps by my seat and poured three litres of beer down my trousers - I wondered why the seat was so cheap with such a great view. Then just before the game the Leicester team kicked the balls they had been warming up with into the crowd. I managed to catch one, but at a price - I'm now typing this with a splint on one hand.. ouch... and only six deadlines to meet this months. And course it was worth it - although getting a full size rugby ball into my case with a broken hand wasn't easy, especially with an audience hysterical with laughter.... But the best bit was the French team's mascot - a sort of Albert Camus in a panda suit , who led the cheers with an ironic ennuie and comme-ci-comme-ca shrug of the shoulders. I think however such complexity was wasted on much of the crowd, who didn't like the idea that win or lose it will all end in tears someday....

Have a good summer, see you in Dublin.....

Steve

The Dubliners' style of relaxed concentration is , of course, perfectly suited to the atmosphere of a SCOS conference

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CALL FOR PAPERS

20th Anniversary Standing Conference on Organisational Symbolism
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Speed:

Research and Representation in the Age of Instantaneous Organization

10th-13th July 2002

Budapest, Hungary
</div>

Hosted by the International Business School, Budapest, and organised in collaboration with the Department of Management Studies, University of Keele and the Business School, Oxford Brookes Univeristy

Executive Summary

Speed… is of the essence, or so we are endlessly told. Nearly one hundred years since Marinetti announced … 'that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed', we remain in its thrall. Not just the 'powerful mechanical beasts' that so enamoured Marinetti, but also the 'instantaneous' transmission of more ephemeral 'information'.

For speed is never satisfied, acceleration is integral. From fast-cycle resourcing to just in time, from compressed development to shorter product life cycles, our innovatory call is faster, faster. We need the new, new thing and we need it NOW! *Where do you want to go today?*

Well, why not go to Budapest? Take some time to consider the compression of time and space on your journey. You could maybe ponder what is happening to your consciousness into the bargain. Is it becoming more fragmented, excessively rationalised, alienated even? What do the philosophers and social theorists have to say about this? Cite Benjamin, Bergson and Bauman. Refer to Giddens, Harvey… Virilio, Weber and Zizek. And what's going on under your feet to nations, political systems and the global economy as you speed through space in an insulated metal box? Let alone `under your feet', what about the plethora of electromagnetic signals that are passing invisibly through your body as you sit there? What is such ubiquitous mass-mediation doing to you, to `us' or to the organisations and cultures of which we form a `networked' part? And what of the many people, attitudes, places and things that are `othered' in the feverish pursuit of speed? So many things to think about as you sit there consuming your pre-packed, microwaved in-flight food (at least it's quick and convenient, even if it does give you indigestion).

Come to the conference, give your paper, listen to others, view the city (or at least the important bits that we've selected to show you on our whistle-stop tour), and fly out again. Pack more in. Time is of the essence. If you can afford to create some space in your busy schedule, write an abstract and send it to us (see below for details). Keep it brief. We're busy. What are you waiting for?

Summary Executive Summary (This one has bullet points)

SCOS XX invites interdisciplinary empirical, methodological or theoretical contributions addressing the phenomenon of `speed and organisation'.

Recommendations. Possible themes might include the following (the list is intended to be suggestive only and we welcome creative interpretations of the conference title):

- Speed and the VIRTUAL or CYBORGANISATION
- The GENDERING of speed in organisations
- Speed and CONSUMPTION
- PHILOSOPHIES of speed

- HISTORIES of speed
- ANTHROPOLOGIES of speed
- SOCIOLOGIES of speed
- GEOGRAPHIES of speed
- Speed and POSTMODERNITY
- Speed and MODERNITY
- `Speed' and PREMODERNITY
- Speed and GLOBALISATION
- The ETHICS of speed
- The POLITICS of speed
- COMIC or TRAGIC aspects of speed
- The AESTHETICS of speed (just think of Glenn Gould)
- Organisational AMPHETAMINES
- The RHETORIC of speed
- CULTURES of rapid CHANGE and TRANSFORMATION
- Fast moving MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS
- Technologies and METHODS of rapid research
- Organisation by `bullet point'
- Slowness

Open Stream

The SCOS Annual Conference is intended as a forum where the latest developments in research on Organisational Culture and Symbolism may be presented, regardless of their direct relevance to the conference theme, and an Open Stream is set aside for this purpose. Papers are invited on any aspect of theory, methodology, fieldwork, interventions or themes which are of continuing interest to the SCOS community.

Workshops

We welcome suggestions for workshops, performances or similar events as well as traditional paper presentations. Outlines of proposed workshops should be not less than the length of a paper abstract and should clearly indicate the resources required, number of participants accommodated, time required, the approach to be taken, and the objectives of the session.

Abstracts

Abstracts of up to 500 words (who has time to write more?) should be submitted by **Friday 30th November 2001** to:

Email: scos@brookes.ac.uk
Please send abstracts in MS Word97 or Rich Text format.

Snail mail: Peter Case
               SCOS XX
               Business School
               Oxford Brookes University
               Wheatley
               Oxford OX33 1HX
               UK

For inclusion in published proceedings, full papers should be submitted no later than Monday 22nd April 2002 (acceptance will be notified by mid-January 2002).

Conference organisers: Peter Case, Oxford Brookes University; Simon Lilley, University of Keele; Tom Owens, International Business School, Budapest.

HAVE YOU JOINED SCOS YET? Check out the SCOS Website at www.scos.org to join SCOS free of charge, to obtain further information on SCOS and for links to the conference web page and on-line registration as these become available.

Postscript. Cyberjunk story related (ostensibly) by a travel agent:

A nice lady just called. She needed to know how it was possible that her flight from Detroit left at 8:20am and got into Chicago at 8:33am. I tried to explain that Michigan was an hour ahead of Illinois, but she could not understand the concept of time zones. Finally I told her the plane went very fast, and she bought that!

Executive Board Meeting
Mulligan's, Dublin, 25th November 2001

(Very) edited highlights

Staying awake while the rest of us downed the black stuff: Valérie Fournier

One of the best venues yet for a Board Meeting – Mulligan's Pub on Poolbeg Street in Dublin. Fantastic Guinness, smoker-friendly and with a great sandwich shop just up the road … incredible that we got anything done at all. But we did – like

Membership Secretary's report

Dave Richards reported that SCOS now has 219 members, who have either joined online, by attending the Athens conference or by sending in the hard copy form. However, there are some discrepancies in members' e-mail addresses – if yours has changed recently, can you let Dave know direct at david.richards@sunderland.ac.uk?

Dave has also been using the free trial version of a software that can personalise letters sent to the mailing list, and will now check out how much the full version would cost to purchase.

Notework

Technical problems delayed the publication of the last issue, and led to an extension of the call for papers deadline. The call also appears in this issue of Notework.

Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies

Negotiations are under way with Harwood for a new editorship team that would include Heather Höpfl and Steve Linstead as main editors, and Jean Mills and Bob Westwood as associate editors. If the proposal is formally accepted, the change would take place in January 2002. The change in editorship would also involve changing the title of the journal to 'Culture and Organization', as reported in earlier Board minutes (see May 1999 edition of Notework), and moving to three issues a year with a view to expand to four at a later stage. Steve also reported that there would be a special issue of Studies from the Athens conference.

Marketing questionnaire

Gavin Jack circulated the report analysing the results of the SCOS marketing questionnaire which was completed by 50 respondents. He highlighted the following points:

- On average respondents had attended 2 SCOS conferences, but 26 respondents had never attended a SCOS conference. It was suggested that we should target all 50 respondents with the call for papers for Dublin.
- 65% of respondents suggested that they preferred a combination of themed and non-themed sessions at conferences. The Dublin conference will involve an open stream.
- On the basis of the survey findings, it was suggested that we circulate a list of possible events that could be organised at future SCOS conferences (eg, a doctoral stream, spin-off conferences etc.) and ask participants about their interest in such events. This will be done in Dublin.
- The survey findings also raised issues about the publication of papers presented at SCOS conferences. We decided that we need to make it clear to conference participants that a selection of papers presented at SCOS conferences are reviewed and published in special issues of journals. Further, papers submitted on time can be posted on the conference website, or included in a CD-Rom. To encourage people to submit their papers in time to be included on the web site or in a CD-Rom, it was suggested that calls for papers should be issued earlier.

Starting with the 2002 SCOS conference, calls for papers will therefore be distributed 18 months in advance (ie, in January for the July of the following year).

Dublin 2001

Conference fees and banking arrangements were discussed. It was suggested that opening a conference account in Irish punts/ euro's would be easier for many delegates and John Bergin is to look into it. More information about Dublin is available elsewhere on this web site, as suggested in the editorial

Budapest 2002

Simon Lilley and Peter Case reported that preparations were under way for the Budapest conference in 2002. The call for papers has already been circulated and is included in this issue of Notework, as well as elsewhere on this site. Click on this link to the Budapest conference site at http://www.scos.org/conference2002/index.htm

Web site

Steve noted the need for someone to manage the SCOS site, for which we could pay an annual fee of £500 for each of the following activities:
- maintenance of the home page, including archiving papers presented at past conferences; and
- creation of new sites for the annual conferences, including a workspace where papers can be posted as they are submitted.

Stop press Matthew Higgins, of Leicester University, has now been approached and has accepted charge of the SCOS web site. See the new layout!

Election report

Peter Case announced that the following people had been elected to the SCOS board:

Robyn Thomas: Treasurer
Anette Risberg: Meetings Secretary
Anne-Marie Greene: Board Secretary
Alison Pullen: Elections Officer

In addition, the following regional representatives were elected:

Albert Mills: North America Representative
Tuomo Peltonen: Scandinavia representative
Sam Arnfeld: UK representative

All newly elected board members are to take office at the Dublin conference but are also being encouraged to attend the SCOS board meeting in May 2001. It was noted that the board did not currently include any representatives from Australia or South America, and that we especially need regional representatives in these areas. Alison Pullen will be trawling the SCOS list server to ask for suggestions.

Election of new chair

Steve is willing to stay on as chair until January 2002 when, subject to official approval by Harwood, he will become co-editor of Studies. The board therefore still needs to think about a replacement for Steve.

Future conferences

Rome was discussed as a possible venue for the 2003 SCOS conference. Steve also suggested Alicante as a possible venue for 2004. The next SCOS board meeting will be held in Alicante to explore whether this would be a suitable location.
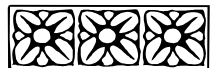
In lieu of our hard copy membership form, this issue of Notework is proud to present the "Stop Press: SCOS Board covered in embarrassment in manner of Bridget Jones" section …

If my memory serves me right, the last issue of Notework featured a collection of Kevin Keegan's more confusing pronouncements (**ed.** - it did). In the same vein, but closer to home, this gem is part of the online form to become a SCOS member:

We may occasionally use this information to send you information about other related products, publications, events or services that we think you may be interested in. if you do not wish to receive this information please check the box below.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Piers Myers works at South Bank University, UK – Piers, those responsible have been soundly beaten … ! But the cockup may well still be there when we go to press – if you go to press online? Maybe to keyboard, or screen, or …. (loud thumps as editor falls off her chair in paroxysms of cogitation)

Book review: Margaret Somerville (2000) *The Ethical Canary: Science, Society and the Human Spirit,* Toronto: Viking/ Penguin Books Canada

Michael Booth

Margaret Somerville holds chairs in both law and medicine at McGill University, and her work on the ethical dilemmas faced by new science has relevance also to the reactions we may make to new organizational practices. Commenting on healthcare systems, and the way these blend public responsibilities with economic constraints, she writes " . . healthcare organizational ethics is a mixed system[;] the safeguards of one system do not work in the other and we can end up with no functioning checks and balances." Increasingly all corporate bodies are facing the same mixture with all the problems for ethical governance this involves. The background to Somerville's study of ethical choice points in health and medical areas (from reproductive technology to euthanasia) is the context also for the social, institutional and symbolic factors all managers must increasingly consider. Like the dilemmas of this book, organizational skills require face-to-face confrontation with issues of science, society and the human spirit on a daily basis.

Early in *The Ethical Canary,* Somerville notes that metaphors, language and analogies at play in responding to new technologies "are definitely not neutral in relation to the ethics we will adopt." There are rich illustrations here of how decisions are expressed in ways reflecting participants' ethical stances. I read the book searching for aspects I could readily transfer from the context of humans dealing with their bodies – making babies, euthanasia, circumcision, withdrawing treatment, implanting organs from other species – to the ethics we will need for our future relating to life practices in any and all fields of organizational complexity.

There are no canaries in the book, except for one; that mirrored in the reflective title. This is a reference to Margaret Somerville herself. Once, dressed in a bright yellow jacket and black pants, she found an audience delighted in her analogy between canaries in the mineshaft and her own role in commenting on the allocation of healthcare resources. The company in Germany hosting the event had been the one that developed the apparatus allowing the testing of the air in mines to be achieved without a canary. But Professor Somerville's point was "if the ethical healthcare canary is sick, we will need to worry about the ethical tone of our society as a whole." The book outlines sustained concerns about how this ethical tone can diminish. If we let our ethical standards become focused just on piecemeal responses to the latest ethical dilemma, we will rapidly find that what we have profoundly if tacitly valued about human social life has taken a long journey in other directions, and there is no easy turning back.

Somerville seeks to take up the spirit of the whole, arguing that the responsibility of a society for preserving and developing human nature has to be safeguarded whatever the challenges new technology creates for us. On the book's cover is a small yellow feather on an open hand. She gives a moving account of this symbol – the frailty of the feather, the cautionary stance yet peaceful meeting the hand conveys – and its significance as we face our own human power to halt and care or to destroy through simply "doing what we are able to do." At the end of the book is an account (based on meeting with her dying father) in which Somerville contrasts and then reconciles religion/ spirituality and "living with the universe." The message of her is not one of restraint on creativity but rather the challenge to our creativity that new processes raise. This links grounded actions (Somerville mentions "patting cats") to a sense of our human place in the universe. Organizations with a thoughtful and reflexive praxis will consider as a key element in their own culture a shared view of how they operate that enables customers and the public to tie them in to these linkages.

One ethical dilemma concerning 'making babies' described in the book arose when embryos were cryopreserved by being frozen in liquid nitrogen (after manipulation by scientists' *in vitro* fertilization). Both genetic parents died in a plane crash, thus raising the definitional query: are these embryos the property of their parents' estate or do they inherit this estate? Since future acts hinge on legal determinations of status, in this case property or persons, new processes render old definitions problematic. Somerville suggests that intervention should be "to the largest extent possible" governed by ethics, not law. A page later she notes that infertility clinics. while offering real hope to the childless, are also a major business and "have been largely unregulated in most countries." Organizational ethics prompts the same questions of how to disentangle ethics from law.

New ethics clearly provide a context and in that sense precede the passing of laws (or politicians will seem to be out of step with those who elect them), yet ethical stances will also form in the light of whatever clarity new laws provide. Laws will not prevent covert and dangerous acts; indeed managers, like scientists, will create definitions of their own. A public process of elaboration of understanding in the course of which both laws and ethical stances form needs addressing and its parameters making clearer.

On the theme of 'have technology, must use it' Somerville quotes from Oppenheimer's 1947 speech on the making of the atomic bomb: " . . no vulgarity, no humour . . can extinguish [the fact that] physicists have known sin . . " Oppenheimer is here rejecting the 'scientific neutrality' which innovators have often claimed. Business and government organizations are similar to science in frequently claiming freedom from dominant values – whether virtuous or sinful – in their acts. Business notes that responsibility for how a product is used must rest with the user; they on the other hand simply provide an opportunity. Governments lay claim to a rationality that can release them from seeming to favour any subgroup of a nation. Each position has a covert moral bankruptcy - like the scientist who suggests that controversial techniques will be tried anyway. Insightfully Somerville ends this important discussion with a statement of the problem:

> for many people the risks and harms they take into account in deciding whether they are ethically justified in running or imposing risks and harms do not extend to damage to our most important human values and our sense of the meaning of human life.

If ethics is about the ethical tone of our society as a whole, this statement recognizes that organizational stances today are frequently ethically moronic. Following this, she asks "moreover, even were we to agree on what we *should* do ethically, would we actually follow that course?" The contexts in which organizations function usually restrict even well-meaning organizations to being in *practical* terms value-free and so dangerous to the human spirit. The canary is short of breath.

There is plenty more evidence of this practical lack in the book. A company sponsors a conference about transgenic pigs (whose DNA contains human genes so that their organs may more easily be transplanted into human recipients) yet fails during the conference to mention its plans to import such pigs into Canada. Somerville writes that "[inadequate disclosures] harm all of us, not … least because earned trust is the basis on which we must now form our society. " To preserve in a holistic way the ethical tone surrounding our dealings one with another, members of societies need more access to data and details of organizational policy considerations than most companies are willing to give. The same is true of access to health care, of which Somerville writes

> . . . decisions not to provide certain treatments can no longer be taken indirectly, or behind closed doors, or be caused to appear as inevitable outcomes[. T]he lines organizations draw need more justification and public discussion than is usual in present times.

Decisions affecting people's health pose risks and harms, as well as benefits, and despite the lack of easy answers there has to be an open process. Alternatives for organizational praxis pose the same ultimate dilemmas. A child and his parents were prevented in one case from choosing the appropriate medical treatment. Somerville writes of this decision that "The court might not have given enough weight to the beliefs of [the child] and his family as important elements in his well-

being, and possibly prolongation of his life." Technical expertise, in order to be used in a human way, needs to be open to wide-ranging considerations. Organizational praxis frequently goes beyond the present status of 'knowledge' and needs the same care to attend to what may be its outcomes. To do this requires ethical guidelines, what Somerville calls a 'toolbox'.

A final chapter presents concepts for this 'ethical toolbox.' Two I particularly like grow out of Somerville's meditations on time and on transdisciplinarity. The first, 'nature time', prompts prudence and restraint in pursuing new science. This is a precautionary ethical principle: since nature takes millions of years in natural evolution to achieve what a human process can now do in weeks, we should have the burden of showing that it is safe to interfere with nature time. The second is the lack in our secular societies of a language to "capture the metaphysical reality essential to our human well-being". This requires a language for crossing boundaries. Perhaps we cannot achieve observance of the first until we have developed the second.

There are many other dimensions in Somerville's toolbox, from risk and trust and values to the stages in the evolution of an ethical stance. I like the concept of '*apparent simplicity*' for the later stages when "our decisions are based on a deep understanding of the ethical issues involved." Symbolic simplicity is achieved only when there has been attention to the earlier stages of chaos and true simplicity. I fear that for many organizations today the attainment of simplicity is through the ostrich method of not looking (ethics? who me? where? not here!). On a cautionary note organizational leaders should beware of ignoring books like this. Whether in the healthcare industry or elsewhere, acting like an ostrich means having a head well covered, but a large body visibly exposed.

Michael works at Murdoch University in Western Australia

And you thought *your* research was cutting edge …

"The idea isn't to shock", performance artist Erik Sprague told lecturers at the State University of New York during his enrolment as a doctoral candidate in philosophy. "The idea is to stimulate dialogue, to get people thinking, to make people wonder. My plan is to slowly transform myself into a reptile, over the course of the next three years. I have already had my body tattooed from head to foot in scales, and these will gradually be filled in with green ink. Surgeons have agreed to implant a bony ridge across my forehead and, as you can see, my fingernails are shaped into claws and some of my teeth are filed. I'm also hanging small weights from the end of my tongue, to lengthen it. When everything else is completed, I will have a prosthetic tail fitted and will then hand myself in for examination, as a work of reptilian art. The eyes may be a problem though. I have to wear maximum strength prescription lenses at all times".

Sprague was duly enrolled as a doctoral candidate.

Thanks to Peter Case, of Oxford Brookes University, UK, for spotting this in *Private Eye's* `Funny old world' column.

Reflections on moving disciplines

Elisabeth M. Wilson

In September 1998 I moved from a conventional business school to a Development Studies Institute. Development in this sense concerns itself with disadvantaged groups in less developed countries – indeed that is our mission. I am a member of the largest HR group within development studies in the UK. In some ways this was the job I had been waiting for all my life, as I had been a volunteer teacher in Ghana before university, and much as I enjoyed aspects of my job in the business school, there was always some sense of alienation, or lack of authenticity.

As an observer of organisational cultures, I was also in an interesting position to compare the two organisations, and their disciplinary milieux. The first thing that struck me was the wall decorations in my new workplace, the Institute for Development Policy and Management. Along the corridors, and in many of my new colleagues' offices, were ethnic artefacts from all over the world, whose symbolic message was difficult to discern; on the one hand they could be seen as trophies captured by foreign visitors (better than animal heads), and on the other hand, they might be objects that proclaimed our affiliation with our students.   I later learned that many were presents from past students. Of course higher education institutions across the UK - and the world - boast about their international clientele, but here was a very different slant on internationalism; over 50 nationalities among the staff and students in a small institute. European students are very much in the minority, and by far the largest group is from sub-Saharan Africa (I can now recognise Ethiopians and Papua New Guineans). We attract only the occasional Japanese or North American student. Challenging ethnocentrism is therefore a central concern of teaching, particularly as most textbooks are inappropriately Western and/ or Northern (there is only one textbook that relates OB to Africa, and it is a continent, not a country).

Curiously our students are referred to as study fellows; rather sexist, but in some ways more apt, given that they are mostly mid-career professionals. I also had to learn a whole new set of acronyms, and soon learned, for instance, to talk about NGOs (non-governmental organisations), whereas previously I had referred to not-for–profit organisations or charities.

Differences in culture were further evident at two development conferences I attended as part of my induction. One difference at the conferences was the absence of slick Powerpoint presentations; instead there were handwritten acetates, with the writing quaintly sliding downhill at one end. Content rather than presentation was valued. Both conferences were much cheaper than ones I had attended previously on the management circuit – it made me wonder where the money had gone on these. They also seemed to run about 15 minutes late, but nobody minded, unlike management conferences, which run strictly to time in my experience. Instead of sharp suits, who were these guys with goatee beards (this was prior to the recent revival!) and polo neck jumpers? I had last seen people like this in leftish bookshops in the 60s. Then there were the plummy accents and the cliquey atmosphere, with questions from the audience answered on first name terms. Instead of gurus or giants, there were some dear old things (including retired colonial officers) and representatives of international organisations. In place of the large, rather combative field in management, here was a smaller, cosier field, with surprise of surprises, a man from the Ministry who came along to explain how to apply for research money. What was this – free gift week? It appears in fact that there is an almost symbiotic relationship between UK development academics and the relevant government department, the Department for International Development (DFID). Despite this, critical debate also occurred out in the open, unlike the marginalisation found in management. Moving closer to core values, it appeared to me that, whereas social and corporate responsibility in management can be viewed too often as an add-on, in development ethical questions are inter-related to research. There is of course also a central paradox here. In development you are basically trying to do yourself out of a job; for instance, in HR arguing for more short courses to be held nationally or regionally where people are employed, rather than bringing people to the UK, and promoting the use of local rather than UK based consultants.

But the best is yet to come. Joy of joys, in relation to my own experience, moving disciplines has been a welcome change, if not a relief. When I taught a module on 'women in management' in the business school, students told me that some colleagues had advised them not to take it 'because it would not look good on your transcript'. However, what had marginalised me within a business school environment was a direct source of appeal to my new colleagues; they knew about gender and development, what they wanted was gender and organisation. So I no longer have to argue daily for the importance of gender as an organising principle, and am often called on by colleagues to incorporate a gender dimension into particular modules.

In fact it is interesting to look at the intellectual introduction of gender to organisation/ management and development studies respectively. Whilst both may trace their original awareness to feminism, it was played out in different ways. Within development studies the introduction of gender followed a practical rather than an intellectual route. Using conventional appraisal tools for development projects, Boserup (1970) undertook a devastating critique, demonstrating that the failure to take women into account, to use a gender lens as it has subsequently become known, led directly to the abject failure of a number of development projects. To illustrate this, women are the bulk of the world's farmers, but many agricultural development projects had merely talked to men, then wondered why innovations were not implemented. Gender within development (not merely development studies) has since moved on from 'women in development' (WID), where special projects for women were initiated, to a gender and development (GAD) perspective, which examines respective roles and power relationships between men and women. The extent to which gender is accepted as an important consideration within the development community may seem surprising. For instance, gender is one of the over-arching considerations highlighted in the DFID's (1997) strategy for development, and is the subject of a further policy document (DFID, 2000) which elaborates gender targets. The 'development case' for the integration of gender is much stronger than, for instance, the 'business case' for diversity, probably because the former has encompassed topics such as human rights and empowerment, whereas the latter turns on an expedient instrumentalism.

Turning to the curriculum, whilst gender is marginalised within management/ business academia, in development studies it is more clearly incorporated. This is not to say that the situation is perfect; there is still a tendency for gender concerns to be dumped/ projected on to me and my social anthropologist colleague (she is female, of course). Looking also at the representation of men and women within the academic context, the differences are not so striking. In both disciplines women academics occupy similar (lower) levels of the organisational hierarchy.

Two and half years have passed, and I now feel acculturated to the development studies field, while retaining a foothold within management, particularly the more critical areas. Would I go back? A lot would have to have changed to tempt me. I feel more authentic, more integrated in my current role, and frankly my students are more pleasant and more interesting.

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For your information …

Harwood Academic/ the Gordon and Breach Publishing Group acquired by the Taylor and Francis Group

Gordon and Breach, under the Harwood Academic imprint, is the publisher of the SCOS journal *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies*. On February 14th, 2001, it was announced that Gordon and Breach has been acquired by the Taylor and Francis Group, owner of Routledge, Carfax, etc. I would like to say that, whilst organizational arrangements at Gordon and Breach remain uncertain, this development is undoubtedly good news for Studies. Taylor and Francis now publish some 800 journals and Studies will benefit from the efficiency of T&F's systems as well as the significant promotional advantages of being part of their extensive list of journals in the social sciences. Please see the announcement of the sale at http://www.gbhap.com or http://www.tandf.co.uk

Gerard Greenway is Commissioning Editor for the Social Sciences, Harwood Academic/ Gordon and Breach.
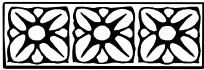
On organizational abuse: "Evil is a robust organization"[1]

John Bergin and Lynn Peck

Introduction

If one were to make a normative statement in this paper, it would be this: organizations are fundamentally premised upon abuse. In our own day-to-day experience of the real world of organizations this may come as little surprise to us. What may surprise us more is that this message seldom appears in the literature which addresses managers and leaders of organizations, or to which they address themselves.

Of particular concern is that many of the values to which we as a community of scholars aspire do not impact on the real world of organizations; indeed it would be true to say that they do not impact on us for reasons which shall be elaborated upon presently. If the common thread of the scholar's orientation is `vaguely humanist', then why aren't we less vaguely humanist? Indeed, are we capable of being so given the limitations that, for example, Schwartz (1987a) outlines?

Although there exist pockets of enthusiasm for a humanistic approach to the management and understanding of work organizations, this approach is much more firmly rooted in other fields of applied social science. In particular one calls to mind the efforts of committed professionals who work for childcare agencies, either public, private or voluntary – agencies whose establishment was based on some altruistic principle such as the alleviation of harsh and unfair living conditions. In the UK and Ireland many such agencies have their origins in the nineteenth century. Their continued appearance and heightened platform in our towns and cities tells us that society's need for these agencies today is no less than it was a century ago, although the nature of their work may have changed. For example, with the National Children's Homes and Barnardo's, the emphasis is no longer on taking foundlings and orphans into homes – rather these organizations exist to facilitate `displaced' youth, to help young single parents, to offer family guidance and child protection services etc. With the increasing development of statutory agencies' services into `cost centres' and the latter's tendency to privatize, the future of the work of these voluntary agencies seems assured for the mid-term at least.

It ought to be added at this stage that this writer's background and interests do not lie in the field of childcare provision by social services departments or other agencies. However his interest in this work has been heightened by the observation that an understanding of much of the behaviour in organizations may be explained by reference to what is termed child abuse.

What we now think of as child abuse is, as we are all probably aware, a very old phenomenon. That it is receiving the attention it now receives, both from the media and professionals, is a relatively recent development. The taboo surrounding familial sexual malpractice remains, the investigation of the abuse appears to us to be quite new. As a constituent element of `civilization' child abuse is deeply ingrained, although it may not be experienced by all members of society. As such an element it is a constant, maybe even normal. Despite the millennia that have passed since Sophocles' penning of *The Thebans*, the incest taboo is so embedded in our (Western) society that it isn't even a commandment in the Christian church. Yet incest and other forms of abuse against children persist. The (mal)practice endures despite society's apparent misgivings.

If the abuse of others is so widespread and persistent in the wider society, what then of its impact in work organizations which constitute only a part of that society? If four in ten people suffer abuse as children, how is this statistic reflected in work organizations – if at all? In work organizations, it is

suggested in this paper that abuse is endemic and indeed may be the *sine qua non* of our everyday experience of them. In the UK during the last ten years we have seen a publication titled *Bullying at Work*. We have heard of a report that up to 800 women police officers have been sexually assaulted by their male colleagues, not to mention the abuse of power and influence which came to light at Mirror Group Newspapers and elsewhere in the wake of Robert Maxwell's death, the Guinness scandal, the Blue Arrow affair to name but a few, as well as, on the international stage, the questionable practices of successive post-war Italian heads of state, Prime Ministers and governments. Likewise the rumblings about Japanese and Chinese governments, Watergate, Irangate etc., and Noam Chomsky's argument that, if the Nuremberg Laws were enforced, then every post-war US president would have been executed. In fact the more one reflects upon scandals based on abuse, the more inclined one may be to think that abuse is the norm.

What this paper argues is that, from the perspective of the majority of organizational actors, the enduring characteristic of organization – abuse - does not change. It is, suggested above, the *sine qua non* of organization. Moreover, until we begin to think of most work organizations as being abusive then what is experienced by millions of our fellow human beings will remain with us. Take as an example of the literature on change in organizations the following extract from a publisher's catalogue which describes the content of an edited book on organizational change and innovation:

> Given the important and logical impacts of change, this major contribution from work and organizational psychologists is welcome. The psychology of how people adapt to and manage change is key to our understanding of the processes by which such changes can occur successfully.
>
> (Routledge Business and Management: Key Books and Backlist, 1992-3)

Perhaps if the word `change' was replaced with the word `abuse' we would have a more accurate picture of the concerns of this text:

> Given the important and logical impacts of abuse, this major contribution from work and organizational psychologists is welcome. The psychology of how people adapt to and manage abuse is key to our understanding of the processes by which such abuses can occur successfully.

The idea that much of management science and organizational behaviour is ideological is not new, and it is this ideology which is the backbone of most management education. Leadership skills are imparted, techniques of motivation are dished out, work design and organization development are both terms with which the average MBA is familiar. Management students' understanding of what these amount to, however, is restricted, it is suggested here, to a blurred image of Herzberg's two factor theory of motivation, McGregor's Theories X and Y, Vroom's expectancy theory and so on (*ad nauseam*). These images are but snapshots of the theories produced by these various ideologues and are very far removed from reality. As images they may be likened to the idyllic depiction of rustic life portrayed in certain visions of country retreats. Consider, for example, Dickens' character Will Ferns' commentary in *The Chimes* on farm labourers' cottages as portrayed by romantic Victorian artists:

> It looks well in a picter but there ain't weather in a picter. 'Tis harder than you think to grow up decent in such a place. That I growed up a man and not a brute says something for me.
>
> (Dickens, 1845)

The message Ferns intends is that such pictures were kitsch in nature. Cooper (1985) has written of organization theory as kitsch, that it makes the unpleasant pleasant - and the theories which form the content of OB courses are no exception. So as Jackson (1986) asks, where *is* the theory? Where is the betterment associated with theory in the tradition of the Enlightenment? Indeed are many of the contributors to the debate in organization theory aware of this angle on theory construction or has the scientism of many of the applied disciplines led us to be more limited in our efforts, advocating self-advancement over an enterprise which aims towards the betterment of

humankind? In broad sympathy with Schwartz, this paper argues that the anti-social actions of committed organizational participants are to be found not just in what we regard as formal work organizations, but also in the less formal constituencies of scholarship.

Child abuse/ organization abuse

What marks the difference in approach taken to these two broad areas of abuse is that in the case of child abuse the child is assumed to be immature, s/he is understood neither to fully comprehend what is happening nor his/ her situation, and to be unable to give informed consent. The child, it is argued, is made to become an unwilling and unwitting participant in aspects of a system of which s/he does not have sufficient cognizance. However, in drawing a parallel between the situation of the child and the employee, the latter can also be seen as immature, as unwillingly giving his/ her consent to a system which s/he unwittingly enters out of economic necessity. Most employees, after all, are dependent on their employers for their economic welfare and, by implication, for their emotional and physical well-being. For the most part, though, their needs are only partly met by the work organization, whereas the organization's needs are met by the labour it buys from employees.

Why labour this point so? The organizational literature would tend to have us believe that organizations are environments in which we can develop our potential as persons – and maybe we can develop that potential. But the insights of Hirsch (1977) regarding the social limits of growth are as applicable to the world of work as they are to the wider economy. There simply isn't enough space for everyone's potential to be realized. The system is aware of this and is structured accordingly. Another reason for taking this approach is to explore the relevance of a common explanation in the field of child abuse, that the abused often becomes an abuser. So in work, s/he who has been abused becomes an abuser. In the field of organization theory, we could argue that managers abuse others because they themselves have been abused earlier in their working lives.

That child abuse is a regular feature of many family lives has already been suggested, and cannot be denied. Yet it is only with hindsight and its accompanying wisdom that this can be affirmed. In the UK and Ireland, from 1970s literature opening up the topic of `battered' women and children (Pizzey 1974) to newspaper reports of child fatalities (eg, Maria Colwell, Jasmine Beckford and Anna Climbie), the collective consciousness of the existence of child abuse has been reluctantly raised and increased familiarity with media coverage of abuse has led to more and more gruesome revelations over the years. From the early 1980s child abuse became a topical item on the media agenda and this has resulted in a plethora of professional interest, training, research and, after the outcome of the Cleveland enquiry (1987), professional caution.

In response to this growing evidence of and attention to child abuse in Britain, and probably expedited by Cleveland, the then Department of Health and Social Security published working definitions of the four recognized areas of abuse - physical, sexual, emotional and neglect (incorporating non-organic failure to thrive) - in *Working Together* (1988). Each of these areas is now elaborated on and parallels sought in the literature on organizations.

Physical abuse

> Physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning, where there is definite knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that this injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.
> (DHSS 1988)

The physical maltreatment of children, as implied in earlier discussion, has occurred for many centuries in many cultures, whether in the form of infliction of intentional harm (beatings, for example) or in forcing children to exist in extreme physical hardship. Smith and Adler (1991) argue that children have been the recipients of physical pain and maltreatment since the earliest years of recorded history, and cite examples of child labour in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to illustrate their position. More recently UK press reports reveal that economic dependence on children is still widespread.

In the organizational context, literature documenting the history of current health and safety legislation and the rise of industrialized societies is replete with instances of organizations which have deliberately put the lives and health of their employees at risk. Contemporary stories of practices in the nuclear power industry, in chemical plants and of rail and air disasters tell the tale of inadequate checks, insufficient funding or negligence. For other examples it is necessary to examine the features of perpetrators and victims, following the child abuse literature. Argyris (1953, 1964, 1991) has developed the idea of abuse within organizations through his interest in the functioning of the `executive mind', which uses the power invested in an executive position to excuse an overbearing influence, lack of interest and compassion and a blunt and insensitive manner which gives no subordinate the chance to `fight back'. The use of negative reinforcement in order to control employees is said by Waldman *et al.* (1987) to be a feature of the transactional leader, who operates by using contingent rewards and punishments. This is echoed in the literature on coercive power (Etzioni 1975), neurotic leadership style (Morgan 1989), objectification in organizations (Sievers 1990) and the passive-aggressive pattern of leadership (Kets de Vries 1989). These writers reveal key perpetrator features in their work: coercive power has the potential to inflict real physical, psychological and/ or social discomfort. The exploitative autocrat trusts no one, imposes authority and uses threats. Compulsive leaders insist that others submit to their wishes, they have to control everything, they see relationships in terms of dominance and submission and they cannot deviate from chosen plans of action. Leaders and subordinates are, respectively, reified and alienated through the process of objectification. The passive-aggressive leader personality follows a strategy of negativism, defiance and provocation.

The majority of these authors also describe the behavioural and attitudinal consequences of these approaches to leadership/ management for their victims, the other employees of the organization. Coercive power, for example, is linked to alienative involvement – ie, hostility towards the organization. The compulsive leader has anxious, passive and fearful followers, who worry for their jobs. The reified leader has alienated subordinates who look to their `hero' to provide a meaning for their existence. The passive-aggressive leader has the capacity to make everyone's lives miserable with their negative attitude: if things seem to be progressing too well, they use spoiling tactics, snatching defeat from the jaws of victory and thereby ensuring a self-fulfilling prophecy. Perhaps this last is also a valid description of most abuse victims' sentiments regarding their abusers.

Sexual abuse

> The involvement of dependent[,] developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not fully comprehend [and] to which they are unable to give informed consent.
>
> (DHSS 1988)

Much research has been conducted into who the perpetrators of child sexual abuse are, and which characteristics identify them as abusers. It is believed at present that most sexual abuse is carried out by an adult who is familiar with the child, often a parental figure rather than a friend or another relative. Different researchers produce an alarming amount of findings (eg, Budin and Johnson 1989; Conte *et al.* 1989; Gordon 1989; Krug 1989; Margolin 1991). Conte *et al.*, for example, attempted to gain insight into how perpetrators identified their victims, how they made their initial approaches and how they developed a relationship which eventually led to sexually abusive acts.

Despite popular misconception, any form of sexual abuse has little to do with sensuality or eroticism, but rather, like rape, is concerned with the exertion of the perpetrator's will and wishes against those of the victim. It represents a violation of the victim by the use of power in whatever form. The majority of people, moreover, will accept this distinction when they hear of the sexual abuse of young children but then the male myth of being led on or seduced by young girls will probably also be introduced into the discussion and, worse still in the case of adolescents, the question of a gentle initiation into sexual activity. To dispense briefly with the former argument, the perpetrator here is using adult constructions of sexual behaviour and projecting them on to children

in order to excuse their own behaviour. To silence the latter, a reiteration of the idea that sexual abuse is an exercise of power is necessary.

The obvious and, for the purposes of this paper, superficial parallel with organizations is sexual harassment. However, while in many cases this may represent an instance of exertion of power, the unfortunate victims are at least aware of what is happening. They may be able to avoid such unpleasant experiences and a code of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours is reinforced/ established in their consciousness.

A closer look at the features of perpetrator behaviour and its consequences for the victim in the case of sexual abuse yields more profound similarities with organizations. Morgan (1989) describes, for example, the corporate culture at Tandemas as imbuing employees with a sense of corporate identity though symbolic rituals, ceremonies etc., and identifies how some cultures deliberately replicate the feeling of family life through their support systems and drive for approval and recognition. Etzioni (1975) also talks of symbolic rewards and special treatment in his account of normative power. Similarly, Smircich and Morgan (1982) argue that leadership is a "process of power-based reality construction", which again begs parallels with sexual abuse, given that the way that the perpetrators of such abuse impose their reality upon their victims. Further Smircich and Morgan suggest that the effects of "power-based reality construction" induce purposelessness and low self-esteem and are ultimately disempowering. This mirrors the research into the long term effects of child sexual abuse (eg, Beitchman *et al.* 1992).

Emotional abuse

> The severe adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment; this category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse.
>
> (DHSS 1988)

Emotional child abuse as a sole category of abuse is the hardest to prove as it leaves no physical scars, no quantifiable deficits and no visible deformity. As a result of this there is a paucity of work which reports the features of either perpetrators or victims of `classic' emotional abuse. Data to prove emotional abuse also have to be collected over a lengthy period of time by a third party and as such are prone to criticism for being subjective and value-laden.

> Emotional abuse expresses itself through cruel and harsh words and deeds which diminish the child's self-esteem and capacity to adjust and grow … Emotional abuse has its roots in emotional deprivation – in short insufficient love.
>
> (Hobbs, 1987: 9)

> The child might appear well dressed, clean and well provided for, but it is seldom spoken to, looked at, comforted, attended when in difficulties, never cuddled or played with. Verbal and physical contact tends to be harsh, commanding or indifferent.
>
> (Iwaniec, 1991: 26)

While the literature on this form of abuse, as suggested above, is relatively thin, the organizational behaviour literature has more to offer, containing many instances of emotional coldness, hostility and rejection. We do not have to look beyond what is spelled out in studies of leader/ manager behaviour for a deeper than literal parallel to the emotional abuse of children. Gibbons (1992), for example, gives a direct example of egotistic leaders concentrating on the promotion of values, the making of decisions and the maintenance of organizational integrity, whilst ignoring the fundamental needs of the workforce. Argyris (1953) outlines the consequences for employees who do not respond to the communication of corporate goals, values, feelings and loyalty. They are, in short, faced with differential handling: conflicts are repressed, feelings are rationalized, tensions are sublimated and blame is attributed to them for not toeing the company line. Faced with a lack of interest founded in the executive management style, these workers also suffer from reduced self-

esteem (Argyris 1964). Kets de Vries and Miller (1984) describe the key characteristics of such a schizoid organization as

> detachment; non-involvement; withdraw[al]; sense of estrangement; lack of excitement or enthusiasm; indifference to praise or criticism; lack of interest in present or future; appearance cold, unemotional.

This portrait would certainly fit the emotional abuser and may also be the adaptive response of their victim. These ideas are developed within Kets de Vries and Miller's case study of the schizoid organization, with references to lack of communication, co-ordination and information flow. The focus of the case study organization was introspective rather than outward and any communication flow was via written memos rather than through personal contact from the remote leader. Kets de Vries (1989) extends this argument in his analysis of leadership typologies, with the `detached leader' being indifferent to the needs of others and lacking in genuine warmth or emotion. This makes them both well adapted to impersonal and bureaucratic organizations and remote and aloof in personal communication, a double-edged sword for those in leadership positions. De Vries' `avoidant personality', whilst displaying similar emotional detachment and indifference to others, does so from a victim's stance, acting out of self-preservation which, one feels, could again be a common adaptive response from victims of emotional abuse.

Neglect

> The persistent or severe neglect of a child (for example, by exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation) which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.
> (DHSS 1988)

The primary difference between emotional child abuse and neglect is the potential which the latter has to inflict physical harm upon the child. Thus, as Iwaniec (1991) suggests, an emotionally abused child may have its physical needs looked after but be unstimulated intellectually and emotionally. The neglected child on the other hand may be undernourished, dressed in inappropriate clothing or does not receive the necessary protection from danger. One early indication of neglect is in young infants' `non-organic failure to thrive' (FTT) where a growing child is significantly below average percentiles for its age in height and weight (Schmitt and Mauro 1989). The inclusion of `non-organic' within this concept is generally understood to mean that an extensive investigation has been undertaken before the FTT diagnosis to ensure that there is no other physical cause for lack of expected growth (eg, Coeliac disease or other food intolerances). Alongside the failure to reach height and weight percentiles, Schmitt and Mauro (1989) suggest that such children often avoid "eye contact, have an expressionless face, and there is also an absence of cuddling response". Such children are underweight, possibly malnourished with a noticeable lack of interest in their environment or significant adults. They are slow to grow with poor skin/ muscle tone and possible hair loss. Neglect often occurs in tandem with physical abuse, as in the well-publicized British cases of Kimberley Carlile, Jasmine Beckford and Anna Climbie.

> The child who fails to thrive frequently gets on with life on its own, failing to make the usual demands and contacts from their parents … Self-stimulatory behaviour and attention-seeking devices are just a few of the many behavioural disturbances in such children. However, the child who fails to thrive is often quiet, unobtrusive, free from tantrums and passive, in short "an easy child", lacking in vigour and vitality.
> (Hobbs, 1987: 8)

Within the organizational behaviour literature, one can see parallels between child neglect and employees' FTT within organizations which do not develop their workforce through regular appraisal – for example, employees who have held their position for years, who are locked within a system with no hope of promotion because of lack of advice and training. That bedrock of work design, Taylorism, with its emphasis on the efficient and effective use of resources – including humans – may also be taken as an example of organizational neglect. Moreover, leadership styles

that encourage personal growth may make employees feel significant, where a sense of learning and the development of competency prevails and the work is exciting and stimulating – but this can be compared to situations which require repetitive work, within a small task area, with no interest being fostered in the end product.

Interestingly, furthermore, the style of two industrial leaders is criticized by Kets de Vries (1989) for being too neglectful; Howard Hughes is said not to have had the capacity to care for others and to have lacked interpersonal skills, and Gustav Krupp is described as restricting employees' spontaneous growth by needing to control every aspect of his daily routine. Relatedly, Sievers (1985, 1986) argues that popular management theories `infantilize' the workforce by denying them any rights or say over their work or conditions. Managers who follow such theories assume that employees are unable to take any responsibility for their work, that they are passive and dependent upon their superiors for decision making or for any meaning in what they are doing, just as the neglected child is dependent on the carer for their ultimate (lack of) well-being. Similarly, Smircich and Morgan (1982) believe that the reality construction of some leaders has a disabling effect on employees who are thereby divested of any intellectual or self-actualizing opportunities, rendering them inactive, purposeless and stunted in terms of their development.

Organization theory and abuse

In the field of organization theory, abuse has been directly addressed by a number of authors, notably Schwartz (1998a, 1987b) and Sievers (1992). The latter suggests that

> the drama in the work situation – unconsciously and in a critical amount of the actors taking part – often invites and encourages regression into an earlier dramatic experience that is deeply embedded in the family of origin.
> (Sievers, 1992: 7)

Schwartz likewise employs a psychodynamic perspective to explain the anti-social actions of organizationally committed individuals. He concludes one paper thus:

> All in all, there is not much cause for optimism in any of the considerations adduced in this paper. But, then, it is the demand that all of our stories have happy endings that lead to these dynamics in the first place.
> (Schwartz, 1987b: 339)

The pervasive ethos of the psychodynamic approach is, if not doom-laden, then at least not optimistic. The task before organization theorists, if the insights of those adopting this perspective are to be pursued, may well appear to be overwhelming. How can the system be cleansed of the abuse which (su)stains it? Calás and Smircich (1992: 248) draw our attention to this dilemma in a very personal way, pointing out in their contribution to an edited book on re-thinking organization theory and analysis that their analysis actually helps to sustain the circumstances they are supposedly re-thinking. Likewise, if the assertion that abuse is the *sine qua non* of organization is accepted, then could organizational theorists survive in a world vacated by abuse? Indeed would there be `organization' in such a world? Such speculations prevent us from replacing the concept of organization with that of disorganization – in fact there are those who might argue that what is currently experienced *is* disorganization. Consider the following:

> Perhaps the first step towards a postmodern interpretation of organization is the recognition that all organized human activity is essentially reactive and defensive.
> (Cooper and Burrell, 1988: 106)

In this seminal paper on postmodernism and organizational analysis, Cooper and Burrell also claim that

> formal organization is characterized by our inveterate urge to suppress its own opposite in such a covert way that we remain unaware of its censoring function.
> (*ibid*.)

They point out that the very discourses which contribute to the field of organizational theory and analysis, for example sociology and psychology, "normalize and anaethetize us to the informal substrata of human life" (*ibid*.) Thus organization, formal *and* personal, may be seen to be built upon its opposite. Again, this is not a new idea. The germs of an understanding of organization as the abnormal being presented as the normal being have been around for more than a century in the work of Freud. However a censoring function is to be found in some of his work, in terms of his refusal to admit the truth of (child sexual) abuse. Elsewhere in psychology there are those humanistic psychologists who suggest that psychology normalizes sickness. Likewise organization theory may be seen in essence to be *dis*organization theory.

If one agrees with the insights above, then what can be done to resolve this seeming impasse? As has been indicated, the task facing those who adopt a psychodynamic perspective may be Sisyphean. However, perhaps an examination of our formative influences is overdue. That is, we should question why we adopt the positions that we do with regard to our understanding of organizations. Why is one theoretical perspective more attractive than another? Following Cooper and Burrell, what is being reacted to? What is being defied? What personal disorder is being presented as order?

In the field of psychology a number of attempts have been made to explain different approaches to the subject of psychology – for example Harcum (1988) and Conway (1992). But these authors tend to psychologize the problem, relying on psychology to explain psychologists' (sick people's) orientation. In other words they are defensive and reactive to defence and reaction.

Given that the work of organization theorists is cultural, that papers, books etc. are artefacts of industrial culture, ought students of organizations not be made aware of the formative influences on the authors of these artefacts, the artisans who produced them? In understanding an artist's work, one is frequently reminded of their biographies – eg, Mahler's love of the countryside, Beuys' experience of the Second World War, Joyce's life in Dublin. Apart from the briefest of detail, one is usually not privy to the same information about the lives of organization theorists. Granted, reference is sometimes made to the personalities or experiences of influential writers on organization – for example Morgan's (1986) work on Taylor, Sewell *et al.*'s (1999) discussion of Mayo or Roper's (2001) discussion of Urwick. But very little is known in general about the lives of current writers on organization. Perhaps this is justifiable in the sense that the subject, the writer, is divorced from his/ her work through some conventional acceptance of the notion of value freedom. But the writer produces the work. And, generally, the work is part of a system which produces the writer. The two are inextricable. Moreover, if this form of organized human activity in this or any other field is a defence and a reaction, ought not the reader be made aware of what is producing the work – that is, of what it is that is being censored?

Psychodynamics: the contribution of Alice Miller

> the proper aim of psychoanalysis is the diagnosis of the universal neurosis of mankind, [of] which psychoanalysis is itself a symptom and a stage, like any other phase in the intellectual history of mankind.

(Brown, 1970: 185)

Alice Miller gave up her work as a psychoanalyst when she became aware of certain shortcomings of psychoanalysis as it is practised and as it is organized internationally. Even within that field there still exists, she argues, a `wall of silence' concerning the abuse of children, and victims of abuse are further victimized by involvement with psychoanalysis. Miller's message is simple: the destruction and abuse which surrounds us in our everyday lives is an expression of the pain and abuse that some of us experience as children. Implied in her writing is a sense that most people are victims of abuse of various forms and to varying degrees, and that, in everyday life, the pain suffered is expressed by abusing others. In her book *Breaking Down the Wall of Silence: To Join the Waiting Child*, she lays the blame firmly at the door of child-rearing practices, the type of practices most `good' families would claim to identify with. Miller argues that the preoccupation with

order and cleanliness, the `do as you're told' school of parenting, has much to answer for. This, again, is not a recent phenomenon:

> the connection between supposed love and "redemption" through destruction is already established in the Old Testament as God-given.
>
> (Miller, 1991: 106)

In this book, Miller gives examples of the destructive behaviour of the likes of Ceausescu, Hitler and other despots, interpreting the effect of what they were exposed to as children on their later lives. She suggests that the wider society does not appear to have learned from these examples that

> the planned destruction of life, of freedom, of truth and people themselves has never led to salvation.
>
> (*ibid.*)

"Countless people", Miller continues, "with a personality structure similar to Hitler or Ceausescu inhabit our planet, destroying life wherever they can" (1991: 111). It should also come as no surprise that the past is littered with such personalities:

> To recognize and integrate something monstrous from our collective past as a society requires considerable time, just as it does on the individual level, in therapy. To rush the process may mean that the mechanisms of denial are further strengthened. We still need our illusions, our "crutches", as we confront a new and painful aspect of the truth on our journey of the child's perception.
>
> (Miller, 1991: 7)

With the above in mind, the good intentions of those whose contributions to the debates on organizational theory and analysis have appeared over the years should not be doubted. Moreover, if in reading this paper your immediate reaction is one of denial, this could be taken as a normal and healthy state of affairs. Denial when transient is psychological. However, when permanent, it is pathological. The time has come for students of organizations to reflect on and be aware of the pathology latent in their work.

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And finally, the very latest in organizational thinking: Purge Management

Jim McDonald

A new management fad is sweeping the post-industrial world, which has major social and political implications at the macro and micro level. We have called it "Purge Management Strategy" (PMS).

The core of PMS is IDS. IDS contains three elements. Identify your best and most talented performers. Demote them. Finally, sack them or force them into a position where they resign (the latter is called IDR).

PMS targets individuals. Its principal objective is to rid the organisation of corporate memory and entrenched expertise which might provide impediments to the PM (Purge Manager).

Where PMS addresses the whole organisation it is called FEEE. FEEE refers to the key principle of downsizing: Fewer Employees Equals Efficiency. This is said to be particularly effective for providing customer service. The longer the queue being dealt with by a single employee, the more productive the employee. The queue may be a physical one but FEEE discourages this approach. Customers are encouraged to queue on their own phone at their cost. This is called FEEE for service, which is why they tell you your custom is valued.

The employees who remain following a FEEE program often suffer from what is called survivor syndrome (SS). We call these employees the SS. The more senior SS are encouraged to emulate the PM and weed out any other inefficiencies such as creativity, commitment and loyalty to the organisation.

FEEE is a very dynamic strategy leading to two key outcomes. First, much of the work which was formerly performed by employees is outsourced. This is commonly known as OSCAR (Outsourcing Staff Competence Accumulates Revenue). OSCAR is strongly supported by consultancies. Second, the organisation begins to lose market share. It is then taken over by a rival. The new executive management team, called a SEEPS (Superimposed Extra-Organisational Executive Purgative Structure), usually then introduces its own FEEE program.

PMS, FEEE, OSCAR and SEEPS are key characteristics at organisational level of a social and economic system called CAPITALISM (Capturing Accumulated Profit and Income while Terminating Alienated Labour In Survival Mode). At the macro level, the outcomes of PMS or SEEPS eventually throw the capitalist economy into a state of social and political turmoil. This is called DISCUS (Disequilibrium In Society Caused by an Unemployed Surplus). And the economy slides into negative growth. Finally, a state of REVOLT arises (Revolution Emanating from a Vast Oversupply of Landless Toilers) and the masses seize the diminished assets of the corporations only to find that they have been SCREWED (Stripped Corporations Reduced to Establishments Without Equity and in Deficit).

Jim works at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia

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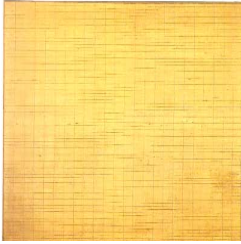
International Conference on
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Rethinking globalization & standardization

Palermo, Italy: 1ˢᵗ– 3ʳᵈ November 2001

Conference Committee: Bruno Latour/Anthony Hopwood/Nigel Thrift

Conference themes

Organizations are usually viewed in terms of their various components, such as individuals working "in" them. But another perspective considers organizations and institutions as being constantly produced by an ongoing process of organizing and instituting. This view highlights the range of practical tools necessary for 'achieving' organizations, such as speech acts, writings, flow charts, accounting, and inscriptions of many sorts. These tools have been examined within a wide variety of disciplines (e.g. technology studies, cognitive anthropology, distributed cognition, geography, accounting, management and organization studies). This conference seeks to bring together academics from these different domains to discuss two of the key resources and creations of organizations: space and time. Rather than taking space and time as a normal feature of an organization existing *per se*, the conference aims to examine them as achievements which require many practical tools, technologies and practices to exist and be sustained. Hence the verb forms: *spacing* and *timing*.

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We welcome papers and extended abstracts which seek to explore the theoretical and empirical issues related to the above themes from a wide range of disciplines and approaches. While contributions may cover a whole range of issues (relating to organizing, space and time), the following issues provide an indication of some of the topics you may wish to examine:

- The fabrication of multiple times, spaces, and actants, and the role of inscriptions and standardised practices in this process of fabrication.

- The maintenance of certain standards and constants and their role in creating current notions of space and time (e.g. the delegation of measurement and categorization to different forms of instrumentation).

- The role of practical tools in achieving organizations, and in particular how different 'spacings' are achieved and how faster 'timings' are produced.
- The desire to achieve transportation of information, without deformation.
- Globalisation and notions of space and time within our 'networked' society.

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