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## Faculty Working Papers

A DIALECTIC APPROACH TO REIFICATION IN MYTH  
MAKING AND OTHER SOCIAL REALITY CONSTRUCTIONS:  
THE I-A-C-E MODEL AND OD\*

David M. Boje and Kendrith M. Rowland

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**College of Commerce and Business Administration**  
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September 16, 1977

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A DIALECTIC APPROACH TO REIFICATION IN  
MYTH MAKING AND OTHER SOCIAL  
REALITY CONSTRUCTIONS: THE  
I-A-C-E MODEL AND OD\*

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without permission.

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## ABSTRACT

A dialectic approach to social reality construction and reification is presented to show the overlap between two current theoretical perspectives-- systems theory and political theory--which have gained considerable acceptance for OD practice. With the dialectic approach, emphasis is placed on how organizations manage the conflict between forces maintaining such pre-theoretic knowledge as organizational beliefs, languages, values, symbolism, ideologies, traditions and myths, and forces supporting their change and adaptation. Dialectic thinking shifts the focus in OD from strategies of harmony and stability to strategies which enable organizations to deal more effectively with the strain between the social structures produced by man and internalized as reified "social facts." A general model is presented to explain the social construction process, i.e., how actors differentiate their continuous flow of experience into patterns of Intentions, Actions, Consequences, and Evaluations. These "patterns" become the object of dialectic forces for their maintenance and/or adaptation. To explore this process further, a typology of "myths" is presented as one example of the social reality construction and reification process. A number of exploratory applications are made to OD, including three potential interventions into the myth making process.



## Introduction

Systems theory and political theory are being called upon by organization theorists to deal with the tendency to "reify" subjective abstractions, such as roles and social structure, as concrete objects. Organizations are reified when they are treated as "things" that dominate human action, rather than as networks of "human" meanings created by human activity. The result of reification for the practice of Organizational Development (OD) is to treat human relations as object relations. Closely linked to the reification process is the dialectic of man creating a society, which in turn controls him and which he then redesigns only to be controlled once again. In like manner, man creates an organization, then reifys it by detaching and forgetting about its subjective creation. Ultimately, it dominates him. This focus on the relation of the dialectic to reification allows us to focus on how subjective reality is eventually treated as objective reality. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Berger & Pullberg, 1967)

It has been suggested that OD drop its human relations emphasis on truth and love in favor of interpretations based on more rigorous behavioral science principles (Bennis, 1969; French & Bell, 1973; Kahn, 1974), especially the aspects of power and conflict imbedded in political theory (Pettigrew, 1975; Tushman, 1977), and secondly the interconnectedness of subsystems (Huse, 1975) as proposed by systems theory. We feel it important that OD be concerned with an apparent area of overlap between these two perspectives. Both perspectives are now paying increasing attention to the significant role that subjective meaning plays in how actors create and become controlled by socially constructed and reified reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). We believe that a conceptual combination of the phenomenological aspects of subjective meaning and the





tendency toward the dialectic of reification can be usefully applied to the theory and practice of OD.

After outlining aspects of systems theory and political theory that are beginning to come to grips with the role of subjective meaning in the dialectic of social reality construction and reification, we will explore the application of this intersection of conceptual thought to OD. We believe that one of the benefits to OD of this newly derived perspective lies in its potential for avoiding the possible reification of current OD theory and practice. As an aspiring applied behavioral science, OD needs to resist the tendency to inappropriately apply the methods of an object-bound science (e.g., physics, biology), which often in the interests of conforming to the assumptions of mathematical modeling, reduces human relations to object relations and treats investigation of subjective meaning and social reality as immaterial and undefinable.

While we agree with the criticisms of Kahn (1974) and others that OD needs to become more scientifically defined, less autobiographical, and needs sharper boundaries of what it is and is not, we disagree with the proposal that OD limit itself to changes in formal role patterns. In our opinion, too narrow a focus on roles tends to objectify OD and defines as less important the notion that roles are abstract conceptualizations, which, through reification, have become detached from their human intentionality (Berger & Pullberg, 1967; Johenson, 1973). If we are to study roles, it should be from the perspective of how actors define them and not from the perspective of imposed a priori definitions.

One way to take a closer look at social reality and its construction is to consider one of its manifestations, "myth making." Later, we will propose a general model of how actors interpret their flow of "spatial-temporal" experience through, among other conventions, the use of myths. In addition, we will present a typology of myths that many authors have attributed



to OD practitioners and to organizational actors. This typology classifies myths which have either an important role in dealing with unknown cause and effect relationships or which provide standards of desirability under conditions of conflict. A number of exploratory applications will be made to OD, including three potential interventions into the myth making aspects of social reality construction.

### Systems Theory and Political Theory

We turn now to systemically defining the perspective of dialectic social reality construction and reification as it is applied to systems theory and political theory. This will be accomplished by reviewing recent criticisms of these theories.

#### Systems Theory

Pondy (1976) may well be regarded as among the first to suggest that systems theory should extend itself by paying greater attention to the role of man's ability to construct and to be controlled by his network of social meanings. Man attributes meaning to events through the use of language and by an awareness of his awareness. Here we begin to note the dialectic of man as active creator of a social reality to which he later assigns the status of objective materiality (i.e., social fact). (Pondy & Boje, 1976:4) It is precisely this dialectic between the subjective social construction of reality and its subsequent internalization as social fact that provides a useful extension to the contributions of both systems theory and political theory. Benson (1977) has defined this dialectic as a conflict in which "the realities accepted by participants at any particular time may be continuously undermined by ongoing acts of social construction. Even powerful actors may be unable to maintain an orderly, rationalized system of social relations in the face of



this ongoing process." (p. 4) The ongoing dialectic is not merely a sequential process of construction, followed by the internalization of dehumanized reification. It occurs simultaneously in various parts of social systems acting on one another. The role of the dialectic and the importance of how actors define situations will become more apparent in the following criticisms.

1. The important boundaries of systems are not obvious or predetermined, but are defined by its actors. This first criticism strikes at the very foundation of systems theory. As originally developed by von Bertalanffy (1956), a biologist, and more recently adapted for understanding social systems by Katz and Kahn (1966) and Buckley (1967) and applied to OD by Huse (1975) and others, systems theory has been attacked for relying too heavily on its biological origins. This has resulted in a tendency to dehumanize social systems to the more mechanistic, cause and effect laws of the biological and physical sciences. It should be pointed out that von Bertalanffy strongly objected to efforts which attempted to collapse what he saw as a search for underlying order at several levels of reality (e.g., moral, social, cognitive, biological, and physical) to order only at the physical level of reality.

Silverman (1971), Weick (1977), and Pondy (1977) have suggested that one of the problems with systems theory applications to social organizations is the imposition of arbitrary and rigid definitions of system boundaries. Silverman (1971) suggests that Katz and Kuhn (1966), despite the many positive contributions they have made to systems theory, have overused the organic analogy to the point of losing the distinction between organization and organism. This has resulted in overemphasizing the necessity for establishing the boundaries of organizations, rather than understanding how actors themselves define the internal environment from the external environment. Focusing in on actors' definitions of their internal and external environments is





related to Weick's (1969) argument that actors "enact" rather than "react" to their definitions of what is environment and what is organization. "Instead of adapting to a readymade environment...actors themselves create the environment to which they adapt." (p. 27) What we are suggesting is that a significant part of the enactment process is dialectic and centered on how actors cognitively define their boundaries. Berger and Pullberg (1967) have suggested, for example, that social structure, once reified, narrows the horizons of what is allowed by actors to make sense. (p. 65) Thompson (1967) has also suggested that organizations, in their attempt to attain rationality, act to control their internal operations and task environments to the greatest extent possible, but never achieve a totally closed rational system. (p. 27) That is, systems enact "closed," rational interpretations of their social order in the face of their "openness" to the input of disorder from their environments. A system acts dialectically by closing itself off to the variety that maintains it. In addition, the system undermines certain reified social realities in favor of some ongoing social construction of change in order to achieve adaptability. As Weick (1976) has stated, the system must somehow address the (dialectic) question of adaptation precluding adaptability. Pondy (1976), in a sense, completes the argument by suggesting that much of what we have been labeling "open systems" is more correctly a blend of Boulding's (1968) open system and control system perspectives. Attention to the dialectic and socially constructed aspects of systems is a helpful way for understanding OD practice and to note the linkage between the forces of rationality and reification and the forces favoring change and adaptability.

2. Systems are not tightly or loosely coupled, but are the product of constantly negotiated conflict. Another result of the organic metaphor in systems theory applications is to see social systems as tightly coupled,



mechanistic entities. One of the reasons why we frequently attend to the tightly coupled aspects of social systems is that the positivistic aspects of the methodologies being employed are better at describing underlying order than disorder and uniqueness. (Benson, 1977). Viewing systems as loosely coupled entities, according to Benson, has the consequence of focusing upon how the social construction process is carried out in differentiated social contexts, which produces multiple and incompatible forms. (p. 4) The social system, in its loosely coupled aspects, produces contradictions in the form of ruptures, inconsistencies, and incompatibilities that the ongoing process of social construction attempts to bring under tighter control and integration (Benson, 1977; Weick, 1976; Lorsch & Lawrence, 1969). The tightly coupled aspects of the system are registered through the application of positivistic methodologies which let us see only the order of the system.

Order, however, is only half of the dialectic. The dialectic described here is between the levels of autonomy and adaptability needed in the component constructions and the need for integrating or tight coupling order on the part of the system as a whole. This negotiation requires us to look at the second perspective, the perspective that emerges from political theory.

### Political Theory

The political dimension of organization can be seen in the interplay of dialectic forces of individuals and interest groups, which originally supported system change and adaptation, being transformed into favoring the maintenance and stability of what they have created. At the heart of this issue is the anticipated and actual impact change strategies will have on the power relationships among system actors (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Pettigrew, 1973, 1975). Participative decision making, additional or new information linkages and



resource patterns, many innovations, and so forth, either threaten those that have interests in maintaining the current order or are welcomed by those seeking the redistribution of power. A number of authors (Bennis, 1969; Pettigrew, 1975; Tushman, 1977) have argued that a major problem with many OD models is the systematic avoidance of the political impact of change on levels of power and conflict.

Besides this dialectic, an often overlooked aspect of politics is the affect manipulations of socially constructed reality have on physical resource and information networks. System change is bound to not only affect the politics of resource patterns, but the symbols, languages, beliefs, traditions, ideologies, and myths that make up the "system of organizational meanings." In this view, politics can be viewed here as the translation of demands and support into collective purpose and commitment through the creation, maintenance, and overall management of meaning that constitutes social reality--while at the same time avoiding long term repercussions. In short, it is the symbolic mediation of demands and support, while not provoking counteraction that threatens long term, personal interest.

1. A reductionist focus on the consequence of politics in resource networks diverts attention away from the process of political action in networks of meaning. Discussions of politics often narrow down to an emphasis on power outcomes, which in turn become translated into theories of antecedent influence over substitutability and centrality in resource distribution networks. One of the few attempts in the OD literature to apply even this level of reduction to the impact of OD interventions on the political aspects of change in resource flows is that of Pettigrew (1975). He has suggested that consultants need to base their strategies on a fuller anticipated awareness of their own and their client's position in the organizational resource network. Pettigrew





also takes us beyond this level of reduction to looking not only at the results of power in terms of resource flows, but to the process of power whereby a focus on the manipulation of meaning becomes important. Consultants must identify and anticipate "...what is salient for the client both in task and political terms, so that proposals may be formulated to receive minimal client resistance and maximal support from the locus of power in his organization." (p. 202) The dialectic can be seen here in how political actors focus on long term counter-acting forces not salient in short term consequences.

In his more recent work, Pettigrew (1976) has given greater attention to the political processes which translate demands and support into collective purpose and commitment. His interest in organizational cultures, which are created by man and subsequently shape him, takes us beyond reductionism to the inclusion of dialectic forces and to the importance of socially constructed reality manipulations in the negotiations between those forces. Easton (1965) has noted that many political actions chiefly arouse and satisfy people, not by granting or withholding substantive resource demands, but by changing the meaning of their demands and expectations. (p. 7) Tushman (1977) has added to this argument by noting that political processes rely on adjustments in norms, values, and even languages to handle uncertain information, diverse goals, conflicting values, disagreements over cause and effect relations, and numerous subjective issues that are open to multiple interpretation. (p. 210-212) We can only conclude that resource networks affect and are affected by socially constructed reality in a dialectic process.

2. Viewing actors from a political perspective goes beyond looking solely at the actor's response to "objective" stimulus to including how actors employ "sense making" to define stimulus/response linkages. Pondy (1975) has suggested



that the very language leaders use can have an important impact on how followers explain and give order to past, present, and future collective experience. Leaders, who have the capacity to go public with sense making attempts that followers can grasp with new meaning, can gain leverage beyond actual resource control. As noted by Pondy, "The real power of Martin Luther King was not only that he had a dream but that he could describe it, that it became public, and therefore accessible to millions of people." (p. 11)

Recognizing language as a power source allows us to discuss the use of symbolism and metaphors in aiding people to transform a loosely coupled, chaotic, and ambiguous world into a more ordered social reality they can accept. Weick (1976) has suggested that "...under conditions of loose coupling one should see considerable effort devoted to constructing social reality, a great amount of face work and linguistic work, numerous myths...and in general one should find a considerable amount of effort being devoted to punctuating this loosely coupled world and connecting it in some way in which it can be made sensible." (p. 13) Once again, we see the importance of looking at how actors themselves attempt to create and maintain a more rational system, which they subsequently reify as "social fact." Politicians have long been recognized for their ability to take followers' misgivings about ambiguity and symbolically redirecting their attentions toward strategies which will purportedly resolve their dilemma (Edelman, 1964, 1971). Clearly, one of the ways OD can impact on the political aspects of social reality construction and reification is to study and attempt to make better sense of the sense making attempts of organizational actors.

Relative to this argument, one of the important facets of sense making and influence in political settings is the politician's reification of subjective experience. Coser (1956) has depicted how politicians act to define



in-groups and out-groups by labeling certain groups as menacing enemies. Edelman (1971) has pointed out how Hitler was able to define Jews as a threat to the social order he sought to create. Reification allows the transformation of subjective values into legitimizers for intended action and retrospective rationalizers of intended or unintended consequences. Sense making is an important aspect of the political processes for the creation, maintenance, and transformation of social reality into resource advantage.

#### Overlap of Systems Theory and Political Theory: OD Applications

Rather than begin anew to rediscover the linkages between systems theory and political theory, OD can look to some work already begun by several political theorists (e.g., Deutsch, 1963; Easton, 1965; Davies & Lewis, 1971; Weinstein, 1971). The integration of these perspectives can be termed "political systems" theory. One area of overlap, for example, can be seen in the work of Deutsch (1963), who has noted that political systems theory has been too eager to adopt the "myth of the system-wide equilibrium."

From the political perspective, this can be seen in the actions of statesmen attempting to restore some classical image of the "balance of power." (p. 196) It can also be seen in the "myth of the stable state." (Schon, 1975) Organizations, rather than being viewed as negotiating a continuous dialectic, are looked upon by many OD practitioners as in need of being unfrozen, moved, and refrozen. This metaphor of organizations as "ice cubes" implies a belief in the existence of a stable state at the time the OD interventionist enters the system to engage in unfreezing and again when he leaves the system in a refrozen stable state. Change is accomplished by repositioning water molecules (actors) in organic space. Such an emphasis is biased toward the stability and maintenance component of the dialectic and aiding the system to achieve greater rationality and control. It does not





note, it seems, those forces seeking to modify reified reality. In other words, this misplaced concreteness directs attention away from efforts that would enable the system to cope with its needs for change and adaptability in the face of a simultaneous need for maintenance of a reified pattern of socially constructed reality.

The dialectic approach to understanding reality is fundamentally different from OD applications based on Lewin's (1947) driving and restraining forces for adjusting quasi-stationary equilibriums. Force field theory directs attention away from how change comes into conflict with itself, i.e., change is seen as a series of harmonious adjustments between opposing forces rather than as the continuous process of the result of social change acting back to constrain subsequent change possibilities. This can be seen clearly in what Mills (1962) has termed has the "laws of the Dialectic."

1. If things change enough, they become different, qualitatively, from what they were to begin with (i.e., the field itself changes).<sup>1</sup>
2. One thing grows out of another and then comes into conflict with it (i.e., driving and restraining forces are linked together in time).
3. History thus proceeds by a series of conflicts and resolutions rather than merely by minute and gradual changes (i.e., greater emphasis is placed on recurring conflicts than stable states).

There is yet another factor to be considered here. Organizational actors must cope with the mysteries which prevade their attempts to achieve the ever elusive rational and stable organization. There are contradictions, inconsistencies, rifts, and gaps in their social fabric. The behavioral sciences have not provided adequate means for coping with them. With but few exceptions, the behavioral sciences have been more concerned with theories of underlying order than of disorder (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1977; Clark, 1972; Benson, 1977).

One of the coping mechanisms undefined in force field theory is "myth-making." What we hope to add in this discussion is an emphasis on the actor's



own meaning systems for making sense of his flow of experience. People possess their own "lay theories" or myths about the world around them, which, right or wrong, affect their behavior.

### Myths and OD

We would like to use the term "myth" to represent a broad category of phenomena, rather than the typical notion of a story or saga of prior events, usually assumed to be of questionable truth when compared to rigorous scientific evidence.

According to Mitroff and Kilmann (1975), science itself can be viewed as a form of "myth making." Kuhn (1962) describes the relationship between myth and science as follows:

"The more carefully they study, say, Aristotelian dynamics, philogistic chemistry, or caloric thermodynamics, the more certain they feel that those once current views of nature were, as a whole, neither less scientific nor more the product of human idiosyncrasy than those current today. If these out-of-date beliefs are to be called myths, then myths can be produced by the same sorts of methods and held for the same sorts of reasons that now lead to scientific knowledge." (p. 2, italics ours)

Myths are more than just erroneous beliefs or superstitions about the world and man's relation to it that are clung to despite contrary evidence. The assumed scientific truth of today can become the myth of tomorrow.

For our purposes, we are particularly interested in myths that are used to explain cause and effect relationships under conditions of incomplete knowledge, and those that help define standards of desirability under conditions of conflict. Pettigrew (1976), building on Cohen (1969), has suggested that myths are tied to political processes in that they justify and sustain the values underlying political interests, explain contradictions between professed valued and actual behavior, and legitimate established systems in the face of environmental threats. (p. 18) It is these and other uses of myths



that allows us to explore the role of meaning in political systems perspectives.

In short, we view myths as socially constructed conceptual filters for classifying and giving meaning to some aspects of experience, while defining other aspects as less important and as recipes that posit rules for conduct and decision making. As such, myths have both political and system uses. We are less concerned with the factual content of myths than with their impact on behavior. As Thomas (1928) has suggested, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."

### Myths in OD

There is some disagreement among OD theorists as to the role of myth making in OD. Margulies (1972) has described OD as somewhere between a discipline applying the principles of the behavioral sciences and a magical shaman employing such devices as placebos and myths to effect change. He specifies several myths that OD practitioners have used to initiate, sustain, and transform organizational change efforts into organizational outputs. Vaill (1974) has provided a similar set of myths in his discussion of "practice theories" used by OD practitioners.

French and Bell (1973), on the other hand, have emphasized the need to "demythologize" OD by focusing on the application of scientific principles from such fields as social psychology, social anthropology, psychiatry, economics, and political science. According to French and Bell, "...practitioners base their diagnoses and actions on the known lawful-patterned events and dynamics that help explain individual, group and organizational behavior." (p. 47)

It is our contention that many organizational events as yet lack specifiable "lawful patterns" and are chaotic enough to be termed "mysteries." While OD does and indeed should continue to apply behavioral science knowledge in ongoing systems, a significant part of OD practice achieves change through the



advancement of myths about OD and by intervening in the myths employed by clients. The purpose of this paper, of course, is not to negate the value of OD and client myths or to suggest that they are dysfunctional--we merely wish to better understand the political process of myth making in social systems.

#### The I-A-C-E Model and OD

We propose next a sense making model for describing the linkage between Intentions, Actions, Consequences, and Evaluations (hereafter I, A, C, E) as a way of capturing the dialectic process of social reality construction and reification. Intentions are usually associated with such terms as goals, visions, objectives, anticipations, plans, and expectations that reflect, attempt to control, and make better sense of future events. Actions are behaviors exhibited by actors. Consequences are the effects, outcomes, or responses that stem from actual, perceived, or anticipated actions. Evaluations describe post hoc (retrospective) rationalizations, reconstructions, justifications, and value judgments. IACEs are linked together in varying combinations to form pre-theoretic patterns that enable actors to make sense of their continuous "spaciotemporal" experience. This is thought to be accomplished in a two-phase process of differentiating continuous experience into various IACE combinations and establishing patterns of connections between these differentiated events.

IACEs fit into our earlier discussion of the social construction and reification of reality as the products of that process. IACEs are patterns that are simultaneously constructed, reified, maintained, and legitimized; they are the subject of socialization, adaptation or revolution, and reconstruction. A single actor may experience any pattern of IACEs sequentially, but multiple actors in multiple settings enact them simultaneously.<sup>2</sup>



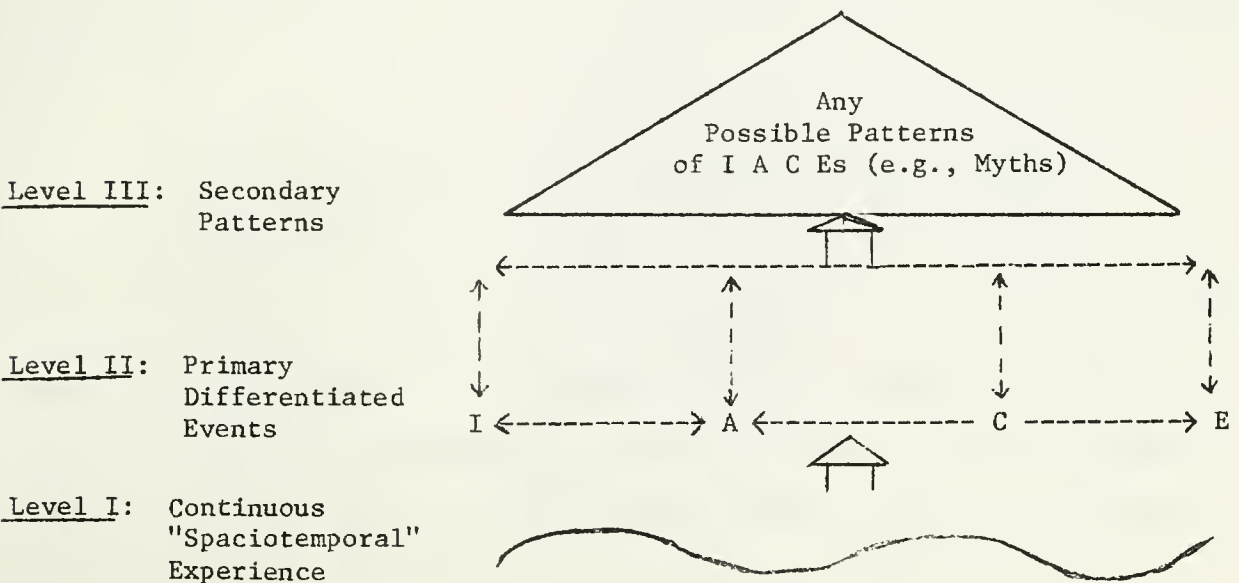


A major point to be made is that actors' myths about their world, whether you refer to them as ideologies, cultural belief systems, philosophies, or lay theories, legitimize intentions (before) and rationalize evaluations (after) to allow the pursuit of some As and Cs in place of others. If an actor can systematically influence another actor's social construction of reality, in a manner that results in resource advantage, power has been wielded. (Pettigrew, 1975). Writers, such as Marx and Weber, have long noted that myths which take hold of the masses have played an historical role in justifying economic interests. (Gerth & Mills, 1948: 61).

A General Model

The general model we are proposing builds on the work of Deutsch (1963), Pondy (1975), Salancik (1976), and Weick (1969, 1976).<sup>3</sup> Below, we attempt to show Intentions, Actions, Consequences, and Evaluations (IACE) as differentiated and abstracted elements from the continuous flow of experience in time and space.

While we by no means imply that sense making is involved in every OD intervention, we feel that many interventions are concerned with helping system actors to make better or often alternative sense of their experience.





"Spaciotemporal" experience (Level I) is eventually patterned by an actor into various IACE combinations (Level III) in order to make sense of that flow. The flow is differentiated by applying categories or dimensions that attempt to capture aspects of the continuity which can be mapped as patterns. A pattern can be any logic, calculus, game, model, or myth (Deutsch, 1963) that defines or creates IACE relations.

While the flow of experience for an actor is continuous in time and space, his contacts with other actors can be better characterized as discontinuous. Brief encounters with other actors from time to time in different situations are the inputs available to him for forming various pictures about them. The actor might, for example, see another person's actions, and even feel the consequences of those actions, but be left with the task of reconstructing that person's intentions or arriving at a post hoc evaluation of differentiated As and Cs. In fact, given any three of these four events, a remembered pattern can be used to fill in the fourth. One cannot assume that the pattern is right or wrong unless one presumes to know the true underlying order it attempts to portray. Many patterns of IACE create cognitive cause and effect relationships and standards for action. According to Bilmes (1976), actors differentiate and pattern events not only in terms of strict cause and effect relationships, but in terms of probabilities.<sup>4</sup>

If, when we learn that event A has occurred, we are enabled to say something about the past, present, or future occurrences of event B with an increased probability of being correct, then we have a departure from randomness--patterning is present. (p. 51)

In our opinion, myths are sense-making devices for interpreting loosely coupled "primary events." These patterns may serve either as a guide for further action or an interpretation of what has occurred. They are used in political contexts to allow actors to assume tighter "closed" connections



between events than may otherwise be possible. We have shown four components as inputs to the sense making process. By contrast, much of the biological/physical systems theory has been concerned only with the connection between A and C and has paid little attention to I and E. In addition, little has been said about the relationship between primary differentiated events and secondary patterns.

In summary, actors in social/political systems experience a continuous flow of primary events (IACEs) concerning which they must make, and often create, sense. They are faced with multiple I's, A's, C's, and E's from which they select certain sets to form secondary patterns that superimpose order to their chaotic flow of experience. Patterns are seen as frameworks for processing information and are stored as symbols by means of quasi-permanent changes in an appropriate medium, such as electrical circuits in computers, cells in nerve/brain tissue, or written marks on pieces of paper. Consider, for illustrative purposes, the case of multiple actors in a social system. The first actor (e.g., manager) has an intention ( $I_1$ ) for an action ( $A_1$ ) he would like to see performed by a second actor (e.g., a subordinate), although he may not be certain about which of several actions ( $A_1 \dots A_n$ ) will result. Further, a third actor may experience the consequences of the second actor's action. Finally, still another actor may have the task of assigning one of many evaluations ( $E_1 \dots E_n$ ) to the I's, A's, and C's he experiences.

$I_1$	$A_1$	$C_1$	$E_1$	
$I_2$	$A_2$	$C_2$	$E_2$	
.	.	.	.	
.	.	.	.	Unpatterned Level II primary events
.	.	.	.	
$I_n$	$A_n$	$C_n$	$E_n$	





It seems to us that when people are asked, "Why did you... or why won't you try this?" that people's evaluations of such questions are very fragile affairs. They respond with, "Because the rules prohibit it," or "Because the law says it should happen this way," or "Because this will go wrong," or "Because that will occur," and so forth. When pressed further, these attempts at evaluation are often found to rest on assumptions which have no correlate in "objective reality." That is, people are able to rationalize intuitive judgments by invention of "social facts." When passed to others, who accept them as valid, these evaluations combine to constitute the reified reality (A or C) of social structure. Actor A initially accepts his conjecture as construction of subjective reality, but Actor B internalizes it more concretely and passes it on to Actor C as cause and effect.

In our opinion, it is the loosely coupled nature of intentions (I), Actions (A), Consequences (C), and Evaluations (E) in social systems which breeds the ambiguity and mystery that encourages and even necessitates the emergence and maintenance of mythology. From this perspective, OD consultants and other actors can be described as activators and modifiers of complex cognitive patterns which permit attitudes and behaviors to reform in ways that bring important adjustments in both physical (e.g., resource allocation) and social (e.g., interpersonal influence) reality. Salancik (1975) has provided support for this position in describing how an actor's intentions are often loosely coupled with his actions. Especially in the case of ambiguity, an actor is often forced to couple his intentions to his actions after the actions have taken place. This process of self-justification (or evaluation) often occurs in organizational settings.



During extremely unfavorable years, company presidents tell their stockholders that adverse economic conditions created the problem. During favorable years, they tell their stockholders that the company's investments in research and development and joint ventures are having the intended effect. (p. 13)

Similarly, March (1976) has pointed out that "...human choice behavior is at least as much a process for discovering goals as for acting on them." (p. 72)

Anthropologists, like Harris (1974), have highlighted the dialectic by noting that "...it is likely that actions determine thoughts at least as often as thoughts determine action, that behavior is a guide for 'culture' at least as often as 'culture' is a guide for behavior." (p. 248) Further, Pondy (1975) has suggested that actors cognitively model the "outside" world as an image or definition of the situation and that actions are planned and selected with this image in mind. (p. 7)

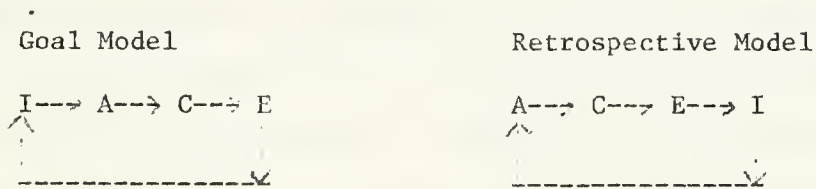
These and other examples suggest that actions and consequences can be either intention-directed or retrospectively made sensible to actors through the use of myths. Actors attempt to make sense of what will be, as well as what has occurred. In the loosely coupled reality of temporal events, as Hume (1955) has stated, "...there are only temporal cause effect connections between events in the mind." Viewing action and consequences as only intentional tends to overlook the role of random and retrospectively reconstructed activity. (Weick, 1969)

#### Alternate Models

A goal model and a retrospective model of IACE are presented below. In accordance with the goal model, actions are always the result of intentions and followed by consequences. Every A-C must be the result of a conscious or latent I. An alternative is the retrospective model, where actions are often the result of unknown evolutionary or random forces and you cannot predict



A and C without experience. From a dialectic view, both models are related. The difference is that the goal model begins the sequence with I, while the retrospective model begins with A.



There, of course, could be other orderings of IACE. Consider the case of the self fulfilling prophecy (IEAC). Actors develop an I or expectation that is sought out, evaluated, and acted upon (A). The consequences (C) are discovered in experience to provide confirmation to the initial intention. For Weick (1977), this (dialectic) process can be seen when actors enact an environment which they attempt to make sense of, and which eventually leads to self-confirming consequences. Weick's cited case of Polaroid stock is an excellent example.

Doubts concerning the attractiveness of the Polaroid investments created the environment which then was imposed on investors and made Polaroid stocks less attractive to hold, thereby validating the initial definition that they might be less attractive than originally thought--a self-fulfilling prophecy.  
(p. 269)

According to Rottenberg (1968), the result of this process was institutions selling ever larger blocks of Polaroid stock until the price dropped from a 1972 level of \$86 a share to \$15 a share in 1975. (pp. 221-2)

In the case of an AECI combination, one actor's A is evaluated by another actor in a way that produces consequences that would not have otherwise followed the action, leading to intentions for subsequent actions. At first glance it might appear that A should always be directly followed by C. We suggest that it is always possible that an I or E can intercede to moderate



the relationship between A and C, especially where actors adopt nonverifiable myths about A-C connections. In short, if we assume a relationship between two or more actors, any combination of IACEs in any sequence is plausible.

An Illustration: Management by Objectives. Noting the potential relationship between the goal and retrospective models of IACE can provide useful theoretical impacts toward understanding a variety of OD interventions. This illustration deals specifically with Management by Objectives (MBO). In MBO, action choices are often assumed to be the result of pre-existing objectives. March (1976), on the other hand, has applied the retrospective model to such an assumption. March states, "It seems to me perfectly obvious that a description that assumes goals come first and action comes later is frequently radically wrong." (p. 72) If this is the case, it seems we could improve the functioning of MBO in organizations by placing more emphasis on ways to discover objectives and ways to legitimize more trial and error actions when the achievement of a given objective cannot be predicted.

A second extension can be made to the practice of MBO by noting that A's and C's often do not match the predictions and guidelines of objectives (I's). Yet, if we assume a goal-dominated model, we are inclined to modify A's and C's to conform to reified objectives, rather than modifying objectives retrospectively on the basis of subsequent and unanticipated action possibilities. In other words, our socially constructed reality of planned objectives may become so reified that they take priority over the IACEs that are being organized.

Evaluation becomes of interest within a program of MBO when one realizes that objectives allow people to answer the question of "Why are you doing what you are doing?" They are legitimizers and maintainers of action. Often the evaluations of pre-stated objectives can be viewed as a useful way to obtain





feedback on the differences between objectives and unanticipated results, providing we allow the possible occurrence of a deviation. Here, feedback itself may be considered as the antithesis acting back upon the reified thesis.

### Combined/Alternate Models

Before we get carried away with replacing the goal model with the retrospective model, we would like to suggest that attempts to rationalize and predict one's intended actions and consequences before the fact is a fundamental part of the organizing process. Instead of arguing in favor of one model over the other, we need to integrate the two models, recognizing that objectives become recipes for future actions, but that many objectives are discoveries rather than inventions. We turn now to a typology of myths of practitioners and system actors and to potential interventions in the myth making process. Toward the end of this paper we will point out how to bypass the IACE differentiation and patterning process through the use of "Zen."

### A Typology of Myths and Myth Making Interventions

To show the application of myth making to OD, we have included a typology (Table 1) that displays an incomplete listing of myths used by OD practitioners and clients. In each case, we have indicated the author who is best known to us for explicating that particular myth. We must qualify our list of myths by pointing out that several of the myths were never explicitly stated by the authors and we took great liberty in reading between the lines. In some cases, myth statements were reversed to lend emphasis. As much as possible, we have attempted to convey the author's original meaning. This highlights an important problem with the literature concerning myths. Much of it talks about myth making without providing concrete examples of the myths being talked about (notable exceptions are Mintzberg, 1975; Margulies, 1972; Mitroff & Kilmann, 1976).



A Typology of Myths Used by OD Practitioners and Organizational Actors

While any classification is in some sense arbitrary, we found it beneficial to categorize myths according to their uses. To reiterate, we are less concerned with the factual quality of myths or in debates over differences between scientific principles that are outdated and myths--instead we prefer to focus on how myths are filters for making sense, i.e., of constructing and anticipating one's flow of experience and as recipes for action. Within this perspective, a review of the literature revealed the following general typology.

Myths Concerning  
Standards of  
Desirability

1. Myths that create, maintain, and legitimize past, present, or future actions and consequences.
2. Myths that maintain and conceal political interests and value systems.

Myths Concerning  
Cause and Effect  
Relationships

3. Myths that help explain and even create cause and effect relationships under conditions of incomplete knowledge.
4. Myths that rationalize away the complexity and turbulence of events to allow for sense making and predictable action taking.

This typology builds on the Thompson (1967) framework and categorizes myths in accordance with whether they deal with standards of desirability (1 and 2) or with cause and effect relationships (3 and 4). We feel myth making will be most prevalent in organizations where relations of cause and effect and standards of desirability are unknown or in dispute. In this typology, I and E relate to standards of desirability and A and C to cause and effect relationships.

Insert Table 1 About Here

In Table 1, we have categorized myths cited by OD practitioners (as well as theorists) in one column and myths attributed to organizational actors in the other. (The latter refers to myths that have been attributed to people



who work and live in organizations, not just to OD clients.) In several instances, we found myths that served dual purposes and therefore could be placed in more than one row or column.

It is interesting that many of the myths attributed to clients are also analogous to myths attributed to practitioners. This may reflect the applied nature of OD. Perhaps practitioners are coopted by the myths of client systems or practitioners employ client system myths as a means of entering, surviving, and effecting change. These and similar questions await further research into the use of myths by agents of system change and system actors.

1. Myths that create, maintain, and legitimize past, present, and future actions and consequences. Margulies (1972) has pointed out how the "myth of newness" and the "myth of OD being based on rational scientific principles" (item 4b) can add the legitimacy needed to obtain entrance into the client system and the support of influentials once inside. War stories (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1976) can also be used by both practitioner and actor to legitimize the continuance of techniques that worked well in the past.

From a dialectic view, besides anchoring the past to the present and providing legitimacy, myths can be important creators of organizational futures. Clark (1972) and Pettigrew (1976) have reported how entrepreneurs and reformers at times push aside the old structure in favor of the image of the potentialities of the future they intend to create. Sproull and Weiner (1976) have documented how just such a process was of prime importance to the creation of the National Institute of Education. Cognitive images of the future are molded and shaped in ways that allow the mobilization of support and the legitimizing of policy statements. People involved in myth-building also aid this process by adding their prestige and reputation to the myth, which then, in turn, attains greater concrete reality.<sup>5</sup>





King (1974) has described how "expectation effects" explain the results of many OD efforts. One group of clients, for example, was told their intervention would lead to greater productivity, while the other group was told that greater improvements in interpersonal relationships would result. Controlling for the expectation effects versus the type of intervention strategy employed, he found that the expectations set up before the change strategy predicted its outcome. Myths about the temporal past and future can be functional in their ability to mobilize support and to provide protection against threats. They can be dysfunctional when the prescriptions of the myth do not do justice to the needs of reality. Margulies (1972) has reported how the myth of nonresearchable variables in OD has impeded evaluation efforts.

2. Myths that maintain and conceal political interests and value systems.

OD efforts are open to being coopted, misdirected, and short-fused when they threaten political interests and are not otherwise able to mobilize political support.

A number of political interests can be hidden by myths, to the detriment of system actors. Baritz (1960) has noted how many of the efforts of applied behavioral scientists (not just OD practitioners) are used by organizations to effect increased advantage over others. Hidden agendas on the part of clients can be seen in their disguised efforts to obtain access to valued information, to institute a program in order to accomplish head-chopping, or to legitimize the failing activities of the institution. Once the hidden purpose is achieved, support for the intervention or program is often withdrawn.

Ryan (1972) has provided a classic example of how institutions often blame the poor and disadvantaged for the inequities wrought by those institutions. Pfeffer (1977) has described how myths can be used by a few elite actors in organizations to camouflage their powers, make decisions in secret, hide the results



of those decisions, and provide the illusion of participation.

3. Myths that help explain and even create cause and effect relationships under conditions of incomplete knowledge.<sup>6</sup> We have already mentioned how many change efforts seem to assume that organizations are like ice cubes. The attempt to make organizations more organic than they are relates to our earlier discussion concerning the role of reified social constructions of reality in systems theory. This same myth of interconnectedness has been widely noted. Weick (1976) has employed the term "loosely coupled systems" to emphasize how actors often incorrectly assume tight linkages between system components in educational organizations.

Simon (1976) has suggested that there are some organizational myths about cause and effect that need serious consideration. One is that authoritarianism is a denial of participation and a threat to self-actualization. He believes we may have overstated this argument to the point of overlooking how authority acceptance provides actors with necessary structure and environmental cues to allow greater creativity. Self actualization, he proposes by contrast, is brought about by striking a balance between freedom and constraint (p. 98). Secondly, Simon suggests that we need to judge organizations by more than just how much participation is allowed. He notes that such a perspective does not provide for an adequate treatment of power relations (p. 100).

A case of myth conflict over cause and effect relationships has been reported by Miller (1955). In colonial America, Europeans attempted to impose their myth about the vertical (top-down) flow of authority on a tribe of Algonkian Indians, whose own myth defined authority as being more decentralized and available to those who possessed the generalized religious power of "Manitu." The Europeans were unsuccessful at making soldiers out of Algonkians because their myth allowed each Indian direct access to authority. Barnard (1939) has described how a similar myth concerning vertical authority is maintained in



corporate settings to allow the matter of order-giving and order-taking to be treated more impersonally, thereby reducing loss of status from compliance and personal responsibility for the outcomes of such compliance (p. 170-1).

4. Myths that rationalize away complexity and turbulence to allow sense making and predictable action taking. Myths of this type play an important role in providing the illusion of rational intention and action and in creating predictability in the face of random and evolutionary forces. Many actors are disposed in organizational settings to see every action as the result of an a priori goal. Every effect must have causal intention. Even if an action is unintended, many refer to "latent" goals that produced the action. Evaluation can hardly be assumed to be intentional in its trial and error process of selective adaptation. On the other hand, many actions in organizations are molded and guided by rational purpose to improve predictability of one's own, as well as another's, actions.

Greenfield (1973) has indicated that practitioners may be making a mythical assumption in treating organizations as identifiable, measurable, analyzable, and changeable. Socially constructed reality affects the actions and consequences of system actors. Margulies's (1972) myth about the rational, scientifically-based actions of practitioners suggests that many OD interventions involve adaptation of strategies to unforeseen contingencies. Margulies proposes that we consider OD as more of an art or craft than as a rational science.

A number of myths are directed toward simplifying the complexity of the flow of events by resorting to ethical codes (Emery & Trist, 1965) and rules (Harris, 1974) that prescribe appropriate and inappropriate action. Rather than respond to the turbulence of the environment directly, organizations often enact a simpler environment of rules and laws for reaching their decisions. Such prescriptions support the belief that there is no randomness in



organizational action (Weick, 1977; March & Olson, 1976) and that decisions are made on the basis of "hard" data and reflective and systematic planning (Mintzberg, 1975). Mintzberg has noted that many managers mythically adopt the planning, organizing, controlling, and coordinating model of management, when in fact they make decisions in haste, live in a quick-paced, high-interruption environment and are busier responding than planning. We turn now to ways of dealing with the myth making process.

### Myth Making Intervention

In this section, we would like to propose three possible interventions into the myth making process of organizations. Our discussion here is tentative and meant to be more exploratory than prescriptive.

1. Myth Transpection. An initial assumption is that, if we dig deep enough into the relationships between actors in complex organizations, a significant part of those relationships will be based upon myths. Interventions focusing upon allowing one actor to be able to see through the filters employed by other actors may help to improve communication and understanding in social systems. In describing ways to increase communication between paradigms, Pondy and Boje (1976) have suggested the application of Maruyama's (1974) strategy of de-monopolization and transpection.

Actors that believe in a single best way to view what is going on around them may be quite unwilling to accept the fact that there can be several co-existing social constructions of reality (i.e., myths). Believers in one truth, one God, one right theory, according to Maruyama (1974), will need to be persuaded in the existence of different logic systems and filters for viewing situations. Here, de-monopolization asks system actors to be able to identify different organizational myths. The second step is "transpection" where the actor attempts to "bracket" his own way of thinking and actually think in terms of the myths held by other actors, so that he can see the same





reality others are seeing, and thereby have the same sense of subjective experience.

The most important step in the transpection process is being able to have Actor A (having understood and been able to see with the filter used by Actor B) explain to Actor B just how he sees B's world. OD practitioners employ similar interventions when they ask clients to engage in imaging. In the imaging process, clients are asked to describe how the other actor sees them. This requires that Maruyama's three-step process be followed:

1. Recognizing differing social constructions, 2. Being able to see the world the way the other sees it, 3. Being able to communicate what is seen in the categories and patterns of his original filter before transpection.<sup>7</sup>

2. Demythologizing. French and Bell (1973) have suggested that OD should concern itself more with applying behavioral science principles to its intervention strategies. We need, in other words, to train system actors to rely more on known lawful patterns of scientific findings that can be applied to their settings. If this is the case, then the suggested intervention is the substitution of the lawful patterns of the behavioral sciences for the myth-patterns of clients. In accordance with this notion, OD practitioners should spend more time training system actors in the principles of the behavioral sciences and be more skillful at diagnosing and counteracting common myths. Re-reification, unfortunately, would probably be a by-product of such an application. Further, we wonder if the behavioral sciences have advanced to the point of being able to confidently advocate their truth over that of the people who work and live in organizations. Does it provide better tools that will allow actors to enact better realities?

3. Myth Symmetry. Transpection and demythologizing may not be enough to cause adjustments in firmly held patterns of belief about cause effect



relationships and standards of desirability. Perhaps the intervention to employ is to balance off clients' and practitioners' myths and incorporate a more symmetrical view of reality.

If the relevant myths suggest a rationalized goal perspective, we might temper this perspective with a greater emphasis on the use of problem and goal discovery and retrospective sense making. On the other hand, suppose actors presume that there is little they can do to counteract the unpredictability and instability in their environments. Perhaps a greater emphasis, then, on planning and goal setting models for actions would help participants gain greater control over their environments.

In myth symmetry, the focus is not on shattering people's deep felt myths, but in providing them with a balanced way of thinking about their flow of experience.

Regarding preferences concerning beliefs, it becomes difficult to argue for adjustments solely from a truth perspective. Symmetry allows for absorption of client beliefs by way of modification rather than rejection. From a political perspective, symmetry avoids much of the counteraction potential brought on by fears of future adjustments in power bases.

#### Bypassing Myth Making with Zen

Thus far we have looked at processes whereby actors differentiate their continuous flow of experience into partitioned events (IACE) and then pattern them into causal and other relationships. Zen proposes a way to look at bypassing the differentiation-patterning process; that is, to put actors in more direct contact with their flow of experience.

Phenomenologists refer to a process of "bracketing" one's own logic system in order to experience the flow of experience in an unbiased way. This is a fundamental aspect of the second step in transpection referred to earlier.



Similarly, Zen Buddhism refers to a way of breaking down one's filtering mechanisms so the flow of experience can be directly felt.

In Zen, actors attempt to recapture the oneness that was natural to them as a child, while preserving the intellectual power they developed as an adult. It is assumed that the art of Zen cannot be communicated directly; its followers must address a series of riddles that are not decipherable by Western logic. One intervention this suggests is to have actors in organizations trade jobs so they can feel the world the other feels. Suppose managers and subordinates switched jobs for a day so that each could not only see but feel and understand the other's world.

Alternatively, it is an increasingly common practice in organizations to rotate aspiring managers through positions in a variety of departments. This enables them to internalize the languages, values, and belief systems of each department.

In the process of differentiation and patterning, we mutilate much of the continuity and therefore the contents of the flow of experience. Zen allows a potential way for us to deal with experiences that are not understandable by categorization. This is a phenomenon to which Pirsig applies the Japanese term "mu." "Mu" is a phenomenon (riddle) that cannot be understood in yes-no questions or either-or hypotheses.

A very strong case can be made for the statement that science grows by its mu answers more than its yes or no answers. Yes or no confirms or denies a hypothesis. Mu says the answer is beyond the hypothesis. Mu is the "phenomenon" that inspires scientific inquiry in the first place! There's nothing mysterious or esoteric about it. It's just that our culture has warped us to make a low value judgment of it. (p. 315)

The question here is, are there aspects to OD and to the social construction of reality by organizational actors that are not reduceable to a hypothesis





format--mysteries to which the technology of the behavioral sciences has not begun to cope? Perhaps OD copes better with the "mu" nature of organizational experience through such actions as myth making than we realize.

### Conclusions

Given the loosely coupled nature of many aspects of organizational settings, myth making provides actors with a way of coping with the uncertainties of complexity, instability, and rapid change. In complex systems, one is often left with the task of inferring from too little information the appropriate IACE connections to be made. Myth making can provide one way to make those connections; behavioral science prescriptions provide another.

If the behavioral sciences are still evolving their respective disciplines--if their paradigms are in revolution, then we might assume that there are yet unresolved and perhaps unexplored mysteries in organizational settings that are currently being coped with through the application of myths. Investigating the myth making process provides us with a rich source of data to learn how actors negotiate that which they do not yet understand. With but few exceptions, we have not begun to tap these data. Yet, myths are believed and they do guide, prescribe, and create behaviors at least as often as rigorous truth. Actors in social settings interact by creating socially constructed realities that, while resisting investigation, are an important part of the fabric of man's relation to organization.

As an applied discipline, OD may want to concern itself with ways of improving the sense making abilities of organizational actors. Finally, not only system actors, but OD practitioners engage in myth making. Often these myths belittle the political side of the organization, leaving practitioners vulnerable to rejection, cooptation, and exclusion. The politics of OD often involves myth making as a survival and coping strategy. The fact that our



beliefs guide our actions is no myth. Clearly, OD's dialectic is the "humanization" of reified structures that people accept as fate.



Table 1 Examples of Myths Used by OD Practitioners and Organizational Actors

Myth Categories	Myths Cited By Practitioners	Myths Attributed To Organizational Actors
1. Myths that create, maintain, and legitimize past, present, or future A's and C's.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What I do is based on the newest technique for facilitating change. (Margulies, 1972)</li> <li>b. My programs are more nonresearchable than other social phenomena. (Margulies, 1972; Vaill, 1974).</li> <li>c. Your participation and support of this change will bring about increased performance. (King, 1974; Margulies, 1972)</li> <li>d. The belief that people can grow and develop in terms of personal and organizational competency tends to provide this result. (French &amp; Bell, 1973)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Stories of all kinds that help establish and perpetuate corporate traditions. (Mitroff &amp; Kilmann, 1976)</li> <li>b. Admission to the school itself confers elite status and legitimacy. (Turner, 1961; Kamens, 1977)</li> <li>c. The charismatic utopian reformer who pushes aside old weak organizational structures in favor of the "novel" image he seeks to create. (Clark, 1972; Pettigrew, 1976)</li> <li>d. Your acceptance and support of the National Institute of Education will facilitate its creation (Sproull &amp; Weiner, 1976)</li> </ul>
2. Myths that maintain and conceal political interests and value systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Truth and love avoid the problem of power and the politics of change. (Bennis, 1969)</li> <li>b. Changing information flows and access is not a political process. (Pettigrew, 1975)</li> <li>c. Selection of the intervention strategy is the value free result of a client need diagnosis. (Huse, 1975)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Organizations use behavioral scientists to "reduce" their control over subordinates. (Baritz, 1960)</li> <li>b. Blaming the victims for their misfortunes rather than actual system inequities. (Ryan, 1972)</li> <li>c. Security requires decisions made in secret to improve their quality. (Pfeffer, 1977)</li> </ul>



Table 1 continued;

3. Myths that help explain and even create cause and effect relationships under conditions of incomplete knowledge.	<p>a. Organizations are ice cubes to be unfrozen, changed, and refrozen. (Boje &amp; Rowland, 1977)</p> <p>b. Consensus decision making always is the best way to obtain the most effective decisions. (Bartunek, personal communication, 1977)</p>	<p>a. Myth of the stable state of social systems. (Schon, 1975)</p> <p>b. Myth of the system-wide equilibrium. (Deutsch, 1963)</p> <p>c. Authority is a gravity flow descending like water from above. (Miller, 1955; Barnard, 1938)</p> <p>d. Acceptance of authority denies participation in the decision making process and is inimical to self-actualization; organizations stifle man's highest drives. (Simon, 1976)</p>
4. Myths that rationalize away complexity and turbulence to allow sense making and predictable action taking.	<p>a. Organizations are an identifiable realities that can be measured, analyzed, and changed, (Greenfield, 1973)</p> <p>b. The actions I take are the result of rational scientific principles. (Margulies, 1972) (This also fits in category #1.)</p> <p>c. OD interventions are guided by data feedback and other value-free diagnostic techniques. (French &amp; Bell, 1973)</p>	<p>a. Knowledge of rules lets one predict how others will act. (Harris, 1974)</p> <p>b. We attend to the class of events that relate to the ethical code. (Emery &amp; Trist, 1965)</p> <p>c. There are no random actions and all actions and consequences are the result of intentions. (March &amp; Olsen, 1976; Weick, 1977)</p> <p>d. Our decisions are the result of reflective systematic planning. (Mintzberg, 1975)</p> <p>e. Decisions are made on the basis of data gathered through formal information systems. (Mintzberg, 1975)</p>





## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>The references to force field theory are ours.

<sup>2</sup>While we by no means imply that sense making is involved in every OD intervention, we feel that many interventions are concerned with helping system actors to make better or often alternative sense of their experience.

<sup>3</sup>See Boje and Rowland (1977) for a more complete discussion of these foundations.

<sup>4</sup>Blimes has elaborated on the matter of probabilities by describing what he calls "unpatterned events" and "patterns with few events." Unpatterned events are a departure from equiprobability where events which occur, say 80 percent of the time, have no particular connection to other events. The event itself is highly predictable, but the system itself has no patterning, although actors often infer causal links. Patterns with few events are defined as: other things being equal, the fewer the number of events, the higher the probability of occurrence of any particular event (e.g., flipping a coin has two equiprobable events, throwing a die has six equiprobable events).

<sup>5</sup>An important point to add here is that myths shed and gain meaning in response to unanticipated consequences and stumbling blocks which must be accommodated. The dialectic process here is roughly analogous to the evolution and revolution in paradigm development described by Kuhn (1962).

<sup>6</sup>What distinguishes these myths from those described in the next section is that these myths deal with the implied concreteness and connectedness of social systems, while those in the next section deal with the use of myths as rationalizers to define away randomness and unintended consequences. The two, admittedly, are highly interrelated and we proceed under that assumption.



<sup>7</sup>Data feedback is another commonly advocated intervention that attempts in part to give actors a better image of how other people are viewing situations and then working through those differences.



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