

QUESTION 1:

The reading for this week is Hatch, Chapters 1 & 2

As stated in the readings, although organization theory is important and continually evolving;

“You also engage in theorizing when you do the creative work of applying theory to an organization...” (Hatch, 2018, p.9).

“At its best, the tension between theory and practice leads to the continual formulation of new concepts, theories, and perspective; at its worst, it produces factions that prompt some researchers to form warring camps.” (Hatch, 2018, p.23).

Based on your understanding of the information provided in the reading and with a focus on the information provided in Table 1.2, Figures 2.1 and 2.2 which of the three perspectives do you tend to see the world and why do you think there is such a range and variety of theories and perspectives related to understanding organizations?

ANSWER:

Which of the three perspectives do you tend to see the world?

Much like my classmates, I find it difficult to identify with just one perspective. I believe there are a variety of situations that benefit from utilizing one perspective over another, and I'm hoping that this course will help me navigate challenges that are outside of my comfort zone.

I was able to dismiss the Modern perspective almost immediately after reading the description. While I can appreciate the structured, data-driven focus of the perspective, that is not at all the type of thinker I am (which is making Research and Statistics a challenging course for me!). If I had to choose between Symbolic and Postmodern perspectives, I think I lean more toward the former. I have a background in English Literature and Anthropology so I am very person and

story-driven when I research. I like to see how issues and problems are situated in relation to an individual, and I absolutely believe that "truth is relative to the knower," as Hatch says in Table 1.2. I also believe it is extremely important to not only identify bias, but be honest about how it can impact one's interpretation or perspective. I know that people often make the argument that numbers and statistics are impartial, but I don't believe you can ever fully remove the human impact and that should be addressed in order to have the most well-rounded and accurate representation of the data and the research as possible. I very much appreciate the Postmodern perspective and agree that language, discourse, and inequality should be addressed within organizations. That all being said, I would still like to learn more about the Modern perspective and how I can ease my way into that type of research and analysis.

Why do you think there is such a range and variety of theories and perspectives related to understanding organizations?

There is such a range and variety in organizational theory because not only are all organizations different, but people also want to learn different things about how they function and the what their goals might be. We all have a different way of viewing the world and making sense of the events happening around us and so we take a different approach to research and analysis.

Relating back to my experiences in education, I was always interested in how my classmates and professors interpreted texts because we all had different backgrounds, interests, and experiences. In order to understand the organizations around us, I feel like we need to understand each other. Delving into the different theories and perspectives surrounding organizations is one way to start explaining how and why organizations form and expand, and beyond that, whether they succeed or fail in their goals.

QUESTION 2:

Based on materials reviewed in Chapters 3 & 4 and Senge's (1990) concept of System's Thinking in a Learning Organization, utilize **one** of the **three** perspective to discuss the following;

How has the global nature of our organizational environment impacted on how we operate and make decisions within organizations?

ANSWER:

Isomorphism is the idea that simple environments create simple organizations, while complex environments creating complex organizations (Hatch, 2018, p. 78). Globalization has increased not only the interdependency of organizations across the globe, but also led to a greater amount of cross-cultural interactions both within and between organizations. Viewing this from a symbolic perspective has the benefit of considering how various cultures and individuals contribute their own meanings, interpretations, and values to an organization. Globalization expands the resource pool of organizations and invites participation from a variety of individuals. Hatch (2018) identifies key terms of the symbolic perspective – intersubjectivity, sensemaking, and interpretation, for example – that can be applied when discussing the impact of globalization (p. 59). As global communication and interdependence continues to expand, so too, will the need for cultural competency, understanding, and organizational coherence.

According to Hatch (2018), globalization “refers to the exchanges and relationships established between organizations and their networks that render existing borders and boundaries... permeable or irrelevant (p. 76). In other words, organizations are expanding beyond physical borders due to a multitude of environmental sectors. Hatch (2018) utilizes Steger (2003) to highlight contributing sectors, including the technological, economic, political, social/cultural, and physical sectors (p. 77). These sectors are advancing and organizations are utilizing sectors to benefit them as they navigate a global market. Whether it is expanding the organization physically to another location due to global markets and worldwide trade, or hiring

individuals with diverse backgrounds, all organizational environments are being impacted and decision making shifts to accommodate these changes.

Globalization connects back to Senge's (1990) concept of learning organizations in that organizations can benefit from expanding their members and continuing to learn from each other. Senge (1990) identifies the ideal organization as one that is continually learning, and that is a benefit of globalization. Fillion et al. (2015) quote Senge (1990), stating that "learning organizations are 'organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together'" (p. 3). There is no way to "separate an organization from its environment", so it would be beneficial to use that as an advantage when making decisions (Hatch, 2018, p. 78). Globalization is necessitating cultural competency and intersubjectivity; Senge (1990) is encouraging organizations to embrace it and utilize a wide array of opinions and beliefs to create a new style of organizational growth and leadership.

While globalization seems like it could be causing organizational decision making to be more complex, organizations have *always* been complex. Hatch (2018) states "because we are part of the environment, the more we learn about and act upon it, the more complex it becomes" (p. 78). Organizational boundaries are constantly blurred and the various sectors, mentioned previously, have interconnected influence when it comes to how organizations are structured. However, the way one person interprets the influence is not guaranteed to be universal, particularly when a variety of backgrounds are involved. This is again where incorporating Senge's (1990) approach to organizational leadership could be beneficial, but of course, challenging.

As previously stated, complex environments create complex organizations (Hatch, 2018, p. 78). Senge's (1990) five pillar approach to organizational learning relies heavily on the first pillar, systems thinking, described as a shift in an individual's mindset to "see interrelations instead of linear cause/effect chains and processes of change instead of snapshots" (Fillion et al., 2015, p. 4). Senge (1990) proposes that organizations should be more concerned with ideas that can be linked to sensemaking and interpretation (Hatch, 2018, p. 59). Rather than continuing to have a traditional mindset about how an organization *should* run, Senge's (1990) concept of organizational learning idealizes how an organization *could* run, again connecting back to the

symbolic perspective by highlighting that the overreaching goal of the organization should be understanding and tolerance with a socially constructed reality (Hatch, 2018, p. 58).

Globalization is increasing the amount of cultural exchange in organizations, so viewing organizational learning through a lens of tolerance and understanding is vital for success.

Hatch (2018) identifies one major concern of globalization as the issue of cultural homogenization, or the standardization and amalgamation of multiple cultures being combined into one, unified culture. Hatch (2018) explains that “cultural homogenization may be contributing to the fear of cultural diversity even as it makes the effects of diversity less profound” (p. 76). While that is certainly a possibility, I believe that the symbolic perspective leans more toward individuals bringing their own culture, customs, values, and understanding into the organization and providing an opportunity for growth. Organizations should be comfortable challenging their values and should look to add new voices to the decision making, particularly when they might not have been available previously. However, if cultural homogenization goes too far, the organizations could lose the valuable and diverse opinions globalization has introduced.

References

- Fillion, G., Koffi, V., Ekionea, JPB. (2015). Peter Senge’s learning organization: A critical view and the addition of some new concepts to actualize theory and practice. *Journal of Organizational Theory, Communications and Conflict*. 19(3), 1-22.
- Hatch, M. J. (2018). *Organization theory modern, symbolic, and postmodern perspectives*. Oxford Univ. Press.

QUESTION 3:

Based on materials reviewed in Chapters 5 & 6 utilize a **Post-Modern** perspective to discuss the following questions.

How do changes in what technology we have and how we define technology impact the culture of our organization and our ability to respond to change?

ANSWER:

Technology and society are simultaneously influencing and being influenced by each other. Hatch (2018) explains that the postmodern concern surrounding technology is mainly focused on the “use of technology to control and represent members of a group or society” (p. 182). There is certainly the potential for abusing technology with the increased access to personal information and the challenges of technological addition. However, there is also the ability to create a new, more liberated society in the form of what Hatch (2018) calls a “global village” (p. 187). The global village, by utilizing technology, can bring together groups of people from varied backgrounds and locations, encouraging an exchange of ideas and support. Social media is one such technological advancement that can be utilized for both good and bad; technology, like many things, is simply a tool and is neither good or bad in and of itself.

Within a postmodern perspective, questions about access and equity need to be addressed when considering the impact of technology. Hatch (2018) invokes Lyotard when explaining that the “computerization of society would lead either to totalitarian control of the market system and all knowledge production or to greater justice” (p. 184). Currently, it seems like we are shifting back and forth between the two extremes with no indication as to where we will land on a global scale. A postmodern viewpoint would necessitate determining who is benefiting from either extreme and who will be left behind. A big factor of this concern is who has access to technology and how is society built to either encourage or discourage participation based on that access.

It is nearly impossible to be a full active participant in some societies without access to technology. While many people probably have a cellphone, does everyone have access to a strong, stable internet connection to utilize it? If not, is there a nearby location where someone can connect to the internet? If so, is it free? When is it open? If someone needs to use a

computer, how many are there? Is there a time limit? Does it have access to all necessary websites? Many of the challenges of technology access are related to socio-economic backgrounds, which adds another layer to the “dehumanizing power structure” (Hatch, 2018, p. 184). It is no longer optional to use technology and so we must make technology work for all people, from all backgrounds, and of all capabilities.

These questions (and more) came to the forefront of my organization during the pandemic, as we have a large population of students who do not have consistent access to the technology needed to complete even basic coursework remotely. Our population relies heavily on the campus resources. Because of this, we started asking solution focused questions. What do our students need? How can we get it to them? Do we have any campus resources that they absolutely need to be successful? Many of our programs are very technology dependent including animation, graphic design, and interior design, and the software is wildly expensive. Students generally did not have any form of computer at home, let alone a computer that can run high powered design software. Our students, due to no fault of their own, were at a severe disadvantage. As a solution for these postmodern questions, we dismantled our computer labs and distributed the computers, laptops, tablets, drawing pens, and other supplies to our students. We lent out over 90% of the on-campus technology and resources and *all* of it was returned when we resumed in-person classes in the Fall. In addition to distributing computers to students in technology focused programs, we refurbished computers that were no longer being used on campus and gifted them to students for basic word processing and internet usage. They were not anything glamorous, but there was no reason for us to keep them when they could be beneficial to the students we are trying to help. We responded to a change in societal expectations by adjusting our organization and finding a solution to get technology in the hands and the homes of those who needed it.

Of course, with a very small organization with a rather flat leadership model (faculty, staff, and students can all easily get in contact with the President), we were able to make this decision quickly and implement a distribution strategy efficiently, with members of the college volunteering to spearhead distribution, tracking, and technology return. Senge (1990) would probably be proud of our shared vision and systems thinking!

Reference

Hatch, M. J. (2018). *Organization theory modern, symbolic, and postmodern perspectives*.
Oxford Univ. Press.

QUESTION 4:

Based on; Physical Space in an Organization (Hatch Chapter 7), and the Woolner article on Structural Change, discuss the impact that space and its design can have on the implementation of a change initiative.

You may also wish to include some of the concepts and principles found in the summary of Kotter's Change of Heart.

ANSWER:

Change and the implementation of change is difficult at all levels, particularly when there are many parties involved in the decision making, realization, and evaluation of the changes. Within physical space, there are innumerable factors to consider beyond the tangible area. Hatch (2018) introduces the idea of space versus place, in which the built, physical space is connected to a modernist perspective while the experiences and meaning of a place are connected to the symbolic perspective (p. 254-5). The design of a physical space and the interpretation of the use (or misuse) of said space can sometimes be at odds, which can then make change and the implementation of change difficult.

In Woolner et al. (2018), the authors discuss the challenge of shifting the paradigm along with the physical changes. They introduce a secondary school with the goal of moving to an interdisciplinary style of learning with “flexible spaces for team teaching” (Woolner et al., 2018, p. 227). The problem with this approach is that they attempted to adjust the space (physical) without adjusting the place (symbolic). While the physical location of the teaching changed, there was no actual change in the paradigm and so the symbolic aspect of teaching remained the same. Because the change was not structured within both space *and* place, there was a disconnect and the change failed. Woolner et al. (2018) write, “rather than embedding changed educational practices, the new space was simply making traditional practices more awkward” (p. 227). The built space and structure may have changed, but that did not carry into the experiences within the location.

Conversely, Woolner et al. (2018) discuss another school in their article that was able to devise change, both physical and ideological, and sustain it with a great deal of buy in from the staff and students. This change started with the leadership, was supported with professional development, and then implemented physical (space) changes to encourage the growth of their Open Futures program. The authors write that introducing the program in such a specific manner “provides a culture within which school staff can situate and understand the structural changes” (Woolner et al., 2018, p. 232). In other words, they introduced the change as a paradigm shift before making physical changes to the space so that there was an explanation and justification for the shifts. This can connect back to Hatch (2018) and the idea of purposeful design. Not only is the space created for a reason, but it is also introduced in a specific way to support that reason.

Currently, my institution is in the midst of creating a “One Stop Shop” to house representatives from Admissions, Financial Aid, Student Accounts, the Registrar, and, potentially, the Student Success Center. The upper administration administered surveys and completed focus groups with each department and, while I understand why it might be appealing to have every student service department in one place, the biggest concern is both place and space. Many departments do not wish to leave their physical location, and the symbolic move is similarly a challenge. In all honesty, I have no desire to move into this model, but I would like a few departments to collaborate more closely. In this way, they are trying to encourage a culture change before they implement any physical change.

Our current offices have a very intentional design that relies heavily on proximity to both students and offices that are not included in the One Stop model (Hatch, 2018, p. 245). The two Academic Coaches have offices located directly in the Student Success Center which houses tutoring, computers for independent use, our supply closet, and is nearby the Care Center (counseling) and Career Services, departments we work with almost daily. Student foot traffic is high in our area, and having our offices in the tutoring center removes some of the stigma surrounding tutoring, as students come see us for a variety of reasons. Not only is there not a physical location large enough to house my department along with those we oversee, but we do not need to be in as much direct contact as some of the other departments highlighted in the One Stop Shop. I appreciate that our administration has taken all of our feedback into consideration throughout this process, as they could have very easily shifted our physical spaces without asking for our opinions or providing any reasoning behind this shift with place and space. As of

right now, I believe that we have made a strong argument for our office remaining in the original physical location but I do understand and appreciate the general concept behind the paradigm shift and I am glad they are involving everyone in the change process.

References

Hatch, M. J. (2018). *Organization theory modern, symbolic, and postmodern perspectives*. Oxford Univ. Press.

Woolner, P., Thomas, U., Tiplady, L. (2018). Structural change from physical foundations: The role of the environment in enacting school change. *J. Educ Change*. 19, 223-242.

QUESTION 5:

Chapter 8 discusses the concept of power and its utilization. Using one of the theories/perspectives presented, discuss the impact this has on leaders as they proceed with implementing organizational change.

ANSWER:

Successful organizational change is often dependent on not only a coherent and creative plan, but also on successful organizational leadership for implementation and guidance. While a modernist perspective approaches clearly defined power structures as a necessary and expected outcome for individuals who are goal-oriented, focused workers, and knowledgeable in their field, that does not always mean those individuals will be successful leaders. Whenever power and control become part of the conversation, it is necessary to consider not only what an individual knows, but also how they use that knowledge, how they interact with others, and what their approach to leadership is as postmodern questions can identify faults in organizational leadership beyond measurable outputs.

Hatch (2018) writes that modernists “expect managers to use their power to control workers” (p. 303). Organizations with a fairly rigid leadership structure might implement change without consulting other members but still have expectations about the results because they assume the change will happen based on who is introducing the changes. There are a variety of theories focused on measuring these outcomes, but they are focused on maximizing outputs and performance before anything else (Hatch, 2018, p. 326). Theories like cybernetic control, agency theory, and transaction cost theory are all dependent on control through power structures that place the organization before the individual. There is always some level of stratified power in organizations and leaders are expected to implement changes to benefit the organization. However, many theories of control ignore the inequality of measuring every individual in the same manner and that can cause challenges for leaders when it is time to implement organizational change.

Obviously, there is an amount of stratification expected in any organization, particularly those depending on making a profit, but the postmodern perspective would encourage the

organization to look at who is in power, who is being monitored or controlled, and who organizational changes most impact. Hatch explains that postmodernists introduced “new appreciations of power, conflict, and control, as well as suggestions for how to...emancipate organizations and their members from the ill effects of domination and exploitation” (p. 311). Postmodernist identify power struggles as a main cause of conflict within organizations, so having control and surveillance theories implemented from a leader would probably make organizational change extremely challenging, or at least cause unnecessary stress and frustration in some team members. While everyone does not necessarily need to agree with the changes, everyone needs to at least understand the goal behind them. As we saw in Woolner et. al (2018) when the school attempted to change the physical space to encourage a new teaching pedagogy, change without comprehension can just make “traditional practices more awkward” (p. 227). Leaders need to be aware of the big and small impacts of their decisions, and address them before change is implemented to limit the reliance on power and control to influence organizational change.

References

- Hatch, M. J. (2018). *Organization theory modern, symbolic, and postmodern perspectives*. Oxford Univ. Press.
- Woolner, P., Thomas, U., Tiplady, L. (2018). Structural change from physical foundations: The role of the environment in enacting school change. *J. Educ Change*. 19, 223-242.