

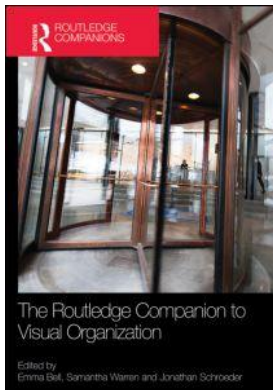
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Publisher: *Routledge*

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The Routledge Companion to Visual Organization

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Drawing as a method of organizational analysis

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203725610.ch14>

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Published online on: 22 Aug 2013

How to cite :- David R. Stiles. 22 Aug 2013, *Drawing as a method of organizational analysis from: The Routledge Companion to Visual Organization* Routledge

Accessed on: 28 May 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203725610.ch14>

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Drawing as a method of organizational analysis

David R. Stiles

Introduction: origins, uses and definitions of drawing

Drawing pictures is one of the oldest and most universal forms of human expression. It predates the use of written language by thousands of years and is practised across almost all human cultures. It is also one of the most powerful and versatile means of communication, with the capacity to arouse strong emotions and provide a readily accessible conduit for ideas. Drawing has never been just about reproducing nature. Indeed, it is believed the first bison and reindeer pictures were drawn on cave walls not as decoration, but as magical devices to help the real animals succumb to the prowess of hunters (Gombrich 1995). Over millennia, drawings have provided a huge range of social functions, including developing imagination through play (Lowenfeld 1987); projecting deep-set mental states (Semeonoff 1976); supporting and critiquing social, religious and political ideas and enhancing and distorting perceptions (Gombrich 1982). Drawings also help convey technical and imaginative knowledge difficult to communicate in other ways (Meyer 1991). Yet, despite being an innate human activity, drawing is still uncommon in social and organizational research. As with other forms of image, this is partly because of concerns about intellectual property and reproduction costs in publishing. However, digitalization and the Internet have brought costs down considerably over the last decade, so more salient explanations may involve academic reluctance to embrace images. Fyfe and Law (1988) suggest images tend to be perceived as 'subversive' and are disregarded in sociology's search for a distinct identity from fields such as art. Although verbal discursive analysis has become much more widespread (see Ezzamel and Willmott 2008) in social sciences, dominant realist ontologies and positivist epistemologies continue the assumption that words and numbers somehow represent more 'scientific' modes of analysis (Stiles 2004a).

Reluctance to use drawings is compounded by ambiguity in their definition. The concept of drawing as a process and product is highly contested within art, as is what constitutes a painting, sculpture or installation. Categories are blurred and socially derived; reflecting prevailing assumptions about art (Chaplin 1994). Contemporary views often see drawings as visual forms produced by hand using simple instruments such as pencils, pens and crayons. Chalk, charcoal and other media can also be applied to two- or three-dimensional surfaces consisting of many materials, although two-dimensional drawings on paper are the most common. Paint has

conventionally been excluded from the act of drawing, with painting seen as a distinct art form attracting its own practitioners and connoisseurs, although again this distinction is controversial (e.g. Wölfflin 1950). Because a drawing is widely regarded as a still image, it is also conventionally distinguished from moving images such as film and video – although single animation frames may be considered separate drawings. Drawing processes have also become more complex. Computer technology has dissolved boundaries, with animation, art and CAD-CAM (computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing) software packages, and printers, screens, websites, cameras, phones and computer tablets assisting or even replacing the act of drawing by hand and of displaying and sharing its product.

We are concerned with a type of drawing known in organizational research as a ‘freehand sketch’ (Meyer 1991), ‘pictorial representation’ (Stiles 1998) or a ‘participant-produced drawing’ (Kearney and Hyle 2004). This is a self-composed, expressive, non-verbal, still, pictorial image or fabrication produced by hand using pen, pencil, crayon, digital or other non-painted means to enable people to articulate their feelings, perceptions and ideas about something. Here, the drawer takes the major responsibility for producing and explaining his/her own picture, with minimal instruction and interpretation by the researcher. Such an image is not intended to capture relationships between variables, as in an academic model; or provide a technical representation as does a diagram, chart or graphic. Rather, it helps people to express their emotions, beliefs and/or understanding about an organization, object or other phenomena. While an ‘inner picture’ is a mental record of a sense-experience, a drawing is a ‘fabrication’: a tangible, physical impression of that inner picture communicated by a person to an audience (Langer 1957). Technology can enable its production and dissemination, but at its simplest a drawing is a non-verbal pictorial image produced by hand using simple instruments.

Words, numbers and other discursive elements may be important in clarifying and communicating a drawing’s meaning post-construction, and may be used in minor ways during drawing (Stiles 2004a); but these are generally discouraged by researchers in the initial act of drawing, since studies in art theory (Gombrich 1982), advertising (Smith 1996), semiology (the study of linguistic signs) and visual sociology (Chaplin 1994) confirm that pictures are powerful expressive forms in their own right. Brain physiology research also suggests pictures engage a different mode of expression from words based on spatial, synthesizing mental processes in the right cerebral hemisphere rather than analytical, verbal reasoning in the left (Koivisto and Revonsuo 2000); with drawing requiring a mental shift towards the right mode (Edwards 1981). Of course, it is difficult to conclusively show that drawing reveals alternative or deep-set mental constructs, although one study shows organizational perceptions not obtained by more traditional verbal questioning (Stiles 2004a) and others indicate it may help surface unconscious responses or feelings about organizational change (Kearney and Hyle 2004). Ultimately, it is reasonable to regard drawings, like other images, as essential components of a *relay* system of how humans develop meaning about their worlds. This means drawings are at least complementary and equal partners to words, numbers, symbols and other components of language, rather than a secondary or subservient medium, as an *anchorage* system of meaning implies (Barthes 1967). As a result, drawings can summarize and communicate complex ideas often more succinctly and with greater impact than verbal means alone (Stiles 1998).

Drawing in social and organizational research

Academic drawing methods have a much shorter history than those concerning other visual forms such as photographs. This is evident in semiology or semiotics (Barthes 1967, 1981; de Saussure 1966; Edeline *et al.* 1992; Peirce 1955; Penn 2000; Sonesson 1993); art theory

(Saint-Martin 1990); visual anthropology and sociology (Bateson and Mead 1942; Becker 1981; Chaplin 1994; Emmison and Smith 2000; Fyfe and Law 1988; Goffman 1979; Hall 1973; Latour 1990); and post-structural writing (Baudrillard 1975, 1983; Lyotard 1984). These texts have championed visualizations as a primary focus within a relay system of meaning (Barthes 1967). However, most analyse images already 'out there' in social discourse, such as still photographs and advertisements; and occasionally paintings (e.g. Hadjinicolaou 1978), film or video (e.g. Rose 2000). While this provides useful insights into society, it often means second-guessing the intent of the original image producers and transferring meaning to contexts other than their original site. Many images studied are produced indirectly as part of social discourse rather than for a particular research project. The result is a 'second-hand' view of pictures, rather than a more indirect engagement with images and their creators. Such visual forms may be seen as authentic, because they are produced by others in complex social and technological processes seemingly detached from the interventions of researchers, reinforcing their mystical appeal as 'legitimate technologies of summarisation' (Fyfe and Law 1988). However, it also leads to images being treated as cultural or historical artefacts subject to the interpretive biases of researchers; with the researcher cast as an expert analyst, rather than allowing people the freedom to construct and interpret their own pictures in response to particular research questions. In fact, Emmison and Smith regard a focus on photography as 'The major impediment to the development of a vibrant tradition in visual research' (2000: 2). In reducing analysis to a few technical parameters, some risk overlooking the subjective power of images completely. For example, Larsen *et al.* (2004) try to measure the iconic impact of advertising photographs and commercials in terms of angle of vision, abrupt cuts between cameras, and camera movement. These go some way towards providing rules on how and why images work, but only partly consider their individual emotive or aesthetic impact and the intent of their creators. Others (e.g. Chaplin 1994) construct their own pictures to represent the societies they study, rather than allowing those they study to do so.

Digitalization also brings particular problems about the authenticity of images. In this volume, Bell and McArthur (Chapter 23) follow Fleming's (2009) notion of visual *authenticity* in organizations to mean uncommodified goods and services and not fake, superficial or phoney practices. Bell and McArthur suggest short YouTube films about social and organizational change may be seen as more authentic if they involve home-made images using such processes as redaction (active involvement of the audience through editing existing content to add value) and an appropriate balance between playfulness and critical rational debate. Leonard (Chapter 20, this volume) also suggests in her chapter that authenticity is a key dimension of a successful corporate visual identity, along with consistency, visibility, distinctiveness and transparency. Discursive analysis of a filmmaker's intentions and client choices provides first-hand insights into this process in both chapters. However, as these authors also note, authenticity is a problematic concept, particularly where new social media are adding layers of complexity and blurring boundaries between actors and practices. For example, some corporate YouTube postings imitate video characteristics such as amateurishness in attempts to generate affinity with their organizations, obscuring both form and content of images. As Leonard notes, uncovering the regime of truth influencing user-generated content is a challenging task. In addition, redaction may change an image, but is each iteration an original, 'first-hand' image or, simply, the second-, third- or fourth-hand (etc.) modification, extension or reversal of another creator's intended meanings? Of course, soliciting first-hand drawings does not guarantee that ideas are authentic in the sense of being original – many would accept that few ideas are genuinely 'new' and redaction may itself result in highly original insights. However, social media and digital technologies may complicate the quest for authenticity in an era of increasing ocularcentrism.

Such creation and interpretation issues underline the importance of allowing people to produce and explain their own images directly for a researcher using as near to a 'blank sheet' as possible.

Drawings provide an accessible way of doing this. Like other visual forms, drawings have a recognized capacity to arouse emotions in both drawer and audience (Gombrich 1982). However, drawings have a particular advantage because of their simplicity and flexibility as a mode of expression and communication. These qualities enable drawings to connect profoundly with their creators and broad audiences. They require minimal, inexpensive, widely available and understood technology such as pens, pencils and paper. Drawings also utilize skills developed from an early age. Infants instinctively draw as part of play from around two years, going through a series of developmental stages from scribbling, through symbolic, narrative and naturalistic constructions (Lowenfeld 1987). Although drawing abilities vary and draughtsmanship may not improve further without training in adolescence, anybody with a normal degree of eyesight and eye–hand coordination, given some confidence and instruction, can produce a basic drawing (Edwards 1981). Some drawers are initially more reluctant (Kearney and Hyle 2004), but evidence suggests that, with 'warming-up' exercises and persuasion that technically proficient art is not required, almost all people will make an attempt (Stiles 2004a). Furthermore, drawings are a most versatile form of expression. While cave walls have long ceased to be a popular drawing surface and paper is the most-used medium, digital technology provides a means to capture, display and share drawings through cameras, scanners and computers.

Despite such advantages, if first-hand, relay-based drawings are rare in sociology generally, they are even more unusual in management and organizational theory. Photographs are created by the researcher to portray organizational life (Strati 2000) and video analyses exist of natural work interactions (Heath and Luff 1997), but an analysis of pictures 'already out there' generally supplements verbal text. For instance, a study of political newspaper cartoons helps reinforce a verbal discursive analysis of institutional struggles over immigration (Hardy and Phillips 1999); and famous paintings are used metaphorically to show how academics' ways of seeing shape their methodologies (Hatch and Yanow 2008). Where greater emphasis is placed on images, these are usually existing corporate artefacts analysed by an academic expert. Corporate newsletters and posters demonstrate corporate behaviour towards gender and race (Mills 1995); photographs on company websites (Lamertz *et al.* 2005) and in recruitment brochures (Hancock 2005) are shown to influence external public perceptions of an industry and organization; Disney's cartoon characters and souvenirs help convey the company's liability of foreignness (Brannen 2004); and advertisements and photographs depict persuasive marketing and branding processes (Floch 2001; Hussey and Duncombe 1999).

Bespoke first-hand drawings are limited to a handful of pioneering organizational studies (Kearney and Hyle 2004; Meyer 1991). Although used to surface individuals' feelings and constructs as projective methods in clinical and social psychology (Semeonoff 1976; Nolen-Hoeksema *et al.* 2009) and art therapy (Broussine 2008), they are seldom used to depict organizations. When they are, methods and results vary. Some researchers influence drawers and prestructure responses by specifying what is required in detail – such as formal diagrams of a hospital's environment (Meyer 1978). Zuboff (1988) asked workers to draw freehand sketches about their job-related feelings as a result of the introduction of new information technology. This was part of a wider ethnographic study of power relationships, in which images played a useful but relatively small part. Others allow drawers freer expression, stimulating greater creativity and imaginative insights, where traditional methods (including strategy techniques like SWOT) are over-used and lack creative potential (Stiles 2004a). Many of these studies sought, or their subjects provided, visual *metaphors*: asking respondents to express their feelings and perceptions about their organization as if it *were* something else, such as a matchstick person; since

explaining a complex social phenomenon such as an organization beyond a few simple parameters such as size, location and products or services supplied often requires imaginative contortions beyond conventional descriptions (Morgan 2006). Vince and Broussine (1996) asked managers in healthcare and local government organizations to draw images reflecting feelings about change. Each drawer wrote down six to ten explanatory words/phrases, before exchanging interpretations in groups: an important research phase to examine whether individuals' perceptions are shared more widely in the organization. Change perceptions were illuminating, although fuller discursive explanations were not presented and images were not reproduced, making it unclear whether the relay principle was being applied – although later work did include some pictures from the study and a vignette from an MBA project (Broussine 2008). Kearney and Hyle (2004) followed Vince and Broussine's instructions to allow faculty and administrators freedom to draw any pictures revealing feelings about organizational change in a US technology school. This time pictures were presented alongside fuller verbal explanations, but the small number of participants (nine) meant a second, group stage was impractical. While the aim was not to prestructure responses, both sets of researchers explicitly told drawers that matchstick people were acceptable in a bid to calm nerves about drawing – and drawings show this may have influenced participants to draw such figures. Bryans and Mavin (2006: 118) instead asked three groups of students and female faculty to 'draw research or a researcher', resulting in twelve insightful pictures based on a rich set of metaphors – although verbal extracts were not provided alongside images, and group interpretations were sought rather than those of individual respondents.

Pictorial representation

A drawing method known as pictorial representation (Stiles 1995, 1998, 2004a, 2011) adopts five research principles seen as important in the discussion above. Pictorial representation (1) is based on the relay principle of equality between image and text; (2) relies on a simple and flexible mode of engagement between researcher and drawer; (3) emphasizes the centrality, freedom and agency of drawers in drawing and interpreting first-hand images; (4) promotes the use of metaphors in producing images; and (5) systematically connects individual and group level images within an organization. Pictorial representation has been used to uncover people's ideas about organizational identity. Although other applications are possible – Bryans and Mavin (2006), for example, draw heavily on the method in analysing perceptions of researchers – I outline this identity approach, with example images and verbal extracts shown from a longitudinal study of university business schools during 1992–2009.

Identity has social psychological origins as the relatively central, distinctive and enduring character of a human entity such as an individual, group or organization (Albert and Whetten 1985; Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Gioia *et al.* 2000) and identification as the social process by which individuals define themselves in relation to other entities (Tajfel and Turner 1985). Underlying the idea of organizational identity are fundamental questions about what an organization *is*. The researcher's aim is to understand how stakeholders in and around an organization conceptualize their organization's identity or identities, given that it is usual for organizations to have multiple identities in people's eyes (Stiles 2011). Unlike many of the second-hand methods above, pictorial representation decentres the analyst from a pivotal role in analysing images. The organizational member is regarded as an active rather than a passive actor in the image construction and interpretation process, composing images and providing a verbal explanation of why these represent the organization. The researcher provides a loose guiding framework based on a broad and universally understood metaphor – that of human personality – and searches for consistencies and inconsistencies in people's explanations of their drawings.

The approach is also consistent with the emerging social practice literature (Schatzki 2005), particularly strategy-as-practice (SAP or SP) research, which aims to discover how strategizing actually happens in organizations, rather than treating it as a ‘black box’ (Whittington 2006). Because of their simplicity, flexibility and expressive power, drawings help connect the rationalities of a range of strategy actors by providing an accessible way of revealing the local-specific (first order) use of language in an organization (Ezzamel and Willmott 2008). Individuals and groups are asked to draw pictures of the organization’s *personality or personalities*: a metaphor that encourages people to reflect on identity by using everyday knowledge about people (Deaux 1991). Strategies can then be developed to address issues raised by stakeholders, grounded in rich perceptions of the organizational context.

Interviewees first complete ‘warm-up’ exercises to help them adopt a visual-spatial means of information processing by first drawing an imaginary human face, then its mirror image, before being asked to draw more creative figures (Edwards 1981). In the first-stage interviews with individuals, each person subsequently draws a *free-drawn personality image* of their organization, with care taken to ensure consistent instructions:

Imagine that you’re trying to communicate with someone who can’t read or write. Some people say that each place you work in has its own personality. I want you to imagine that your organization has its own personality or personalities and do a rough sketch to try to explain to this person who can’t read or write what that personality or personalities look like.

The conversation is otherwise unstructured to ensure ideas emerge without undue prompting. The characteristic of illiteracy discourages the use of words or numbers, and drawers interpret their own pictures immediately after drawing. These explanations are audio- or video-recorded: the latter useful in group settings to allow clearer attribution of text to individuals. Recordings are transcribed verbatim and analysed using Stiles’ (2004a) approach, involving the search for patterns in visual and verbal data regarding variabilities and consistencies (shared accounts) in content or form, based on critical psychological approaches (Harré and Gillett 1994; Potter and Wetherell 1987). These variabilities and consistencies are grouped into themes, with data reproduced naturalistically. A grounded theory approach generates data until the point of theoretical saturation, i.e. where no new themes emerge (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Internal and external stakeholder focus groups subsequently help to explore and validate initial interview data, construct collective organizational images and capture images of the organization over time. In this study, academics, managers, administrative staff, students and the business community were grouped separately to compare and contrast perceptions. The intensive nature of the method and the need to capture images to allow for substantive organizational change may mean making decisions as to appropriate intervals between follow-up interviews, so students were interviewed here at the beginning and end of their studies; and others at five-year intervals. This provided an invaluable perspective on change during the long study period. Five personality images and explanations from individual interviews were fed back into each focus group to provide a link between individual and group stages. Groups were asked to reach a consensus as to which, if any, of the five images represented the school. Groups were then free to explore their own ideas about the organization’s identity and produce a *group free-drawn personality image*. Again following Stiles (2004a), consistencies and variabilities were identified across transcripts.

An extended report on the project reproduces all drawings and substantive verbal extracts from individual and group interviews to provide a full account (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 173).

This report offers participants the opportunity for feedback and reflection upon emerging themes. The final stage may be to communicate findings to a wider audience through academic or practitioner publications. These present particular style and format limitations, requiring greater summarizing and editing of data and findings than reports. However, the relay principle still demands substantive, naturalistic line-numbered (for easier reference) verbal extracts alongside images to 'let organizational voices speak for themselves'. Text from both researcher and respondents is included and material is only removed to shorten extracts for publication if this does not substantively change the context or meaning of the extract and to prevent individuals being identified. The analysis focuses on themes emerging from the data, with drawers' own explanations an important part of the overall narrative rather than just the researcher's reporting. I show examples from this study below to illustrate the method's application.

A case study: UK business school

As expected, drawings reflected multiple views of the organization's identity, varying between individuals, groups and over time. However, consistent identity themes also appeared. These themes were expressed in different ways, but common visual devices were evident. Overall, the business school was not depicted as a happy personality. The reasons for this are provided by interrelated identity themes that remained remarkably salient over the entire study period. People perceived the school personality as preoccupied with research, miserly owing to a lack of resources, disenfranchised and anonymous, fragmented, and overly male. At best, rather than showing stakeholders identifying strongly with the business school, many appeared to articulate schizo-identification (Elsbach 2001), where individuals in the organization actively and intensively identified and disidentified with different aspects of the school over the 17-year study.

Research preoccupation

The school personality was viewed as overly research focused. Although this was positive in the sense of achieving a scholarly mission for this premier UK research institution, it was also widely believed to be to the detriment of teaching and student interests, generating particular conflicts over identity. Albert and Whetten (1985) noted normative and utilitarian identity conflict may be an integral dimension of a professional school, but the school's strategy was seen to lead to manifest fragmentation: where protecting academic integrity conflicted with acquiring ever-tightening resources. A research preoccupation was amplified by intense pressures from successive externally driven research assessments encouraging the school to remain in the top research echelon, despite the importance of student income. [Figure 14.1](#) exemplifies this theme.

Figure 14.1 Extract: Katie (lecturer)

1. **K:** Er, man in a white coat with a mortarboard. An academic more
2. **concerned with research, er, it's supposed to signify...But he's**
3. **behind a door with 'DO NOT DISTURB'...notice on the handle,**
4. **which shows he doesn't really want to be bothered. He wants to be**
5. **getting on with his work.**
6. **R:** Right. Right. Do not disturb. So, who is, is that a message
7. **to anyone in particular then?**
8. **K:** Er, everybody out there who isn't in academia.
9. **R:** Right. Right. What about to students as well?
10. **K:** Yeah.



Figure 14.1 Individual free-drawn personality image: Katie, lecturer

11. R: Or not?
12. K: Depends on what they wanted him for. If it was going to further
13. his aims then he would be quite happy to see them.
14. R: Right. Right. So he's wearing a white coat?
15. K: Yeah, just to signify that he's interested in research – that's the, you
16. know, the standard scientist.

Miserliness/meanness with money

An important linked characteristic was a strong sense of miserliness and financial hardship – as reducing government funding necessitated raising extra income through research grants contingent on a good research rating; and through student fees. Figures 14.1 and 14.2 depict currency signs in the figure's eyes and on a moneybag, with Figure 14.2 showing miserly attributes.

Figure 14.2 Extract 1: Darren (lecturer)

1. D: Uhm, secondly what you notice is that the person is holding on to
2. its money, which is something that it does rather than spend it. It
3. holds on to it...
4. R: Holding on to its money?

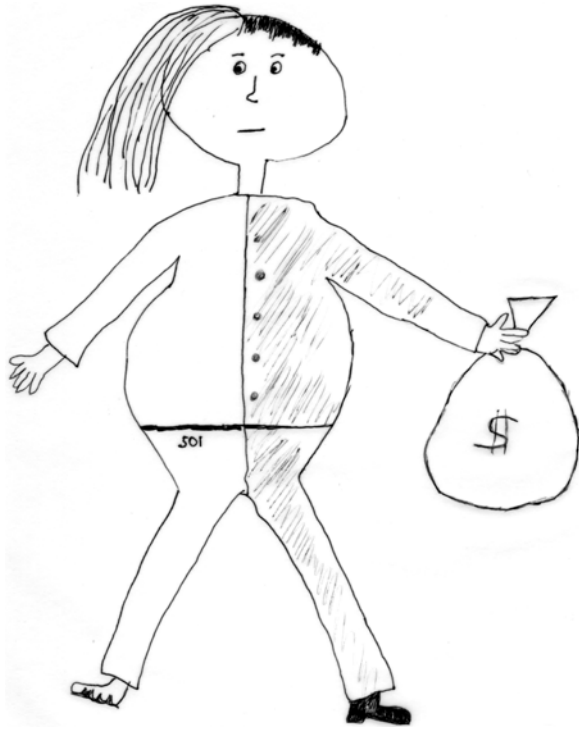


Figure 14.2 Individual free-drawn personality image: Darren, lecturer



Figure 14.3 Individual free-drawn personality image: Mark, full professor

5. **D: If I can draw a grip better, I would have had it gripping and.**
6. **R: Not let it go?**
7. **D: Yeah, holding on to its money.**

This meant meanness in terms of providing computer equipment and a feeling that academics were acting almost as sales representatives to attract student fees and grant income. Academics articulated this as a continuing pressure against engaging with students and conducting longer-term and practitioner-oriented research.

Disenfranchisement

Until he stepped down in the last 18 months of the study, the school had had a leader for an unusually long time. A theme emerging consistently across interviews and focus groups was the dominance of the leader in both strategic and operational decision-making, which was seen to exacerbate the school's fragmentation. At the start of the study, the leader was seen as a lone figure (Figure 14.3) trying to carry a burdensome administrative load, unwilling to delegate to others:

Figure 14.3 Extract: Mark (full professor)

1. **M: It's a man. Probably [names leader]. He's carrying a great load,**
2. **which is too big for him, so it's slipping. [pause] This is the**
3. **different parts of the Business School. [pause] He should try to**
4. **give bits away, but he won't.**

In Figure 14.4, an MBA student group depicted social distance between leader and the body of the school through a long neck separating the head and body and folded arms to show a one-way flow of information, influence and communication:

Figure 14.4 Extract 1: MBA focus group

1. **S1: The long neck was quite a good idea.**
2. **S2: Yeah.**
3. **S3: Yeah, I think so.**
4. **S4: Like the Student-Staff Panels. And you always hear that [pause]**
5. **going into them, right, you hear [pause] but never have you seen any**
6. **results from it. [pause] And it's almost like he's being closed-**
7. **minded. They do this, they have the Student-Staff Panels, just for...**
8. **S3: Maybe his arms are folded. Unapproachable?**
9. **S4: Yeah. Yeah.**
10. **S1: Can you draw folded-up? [S3 draws folded arms on figure]**
11. **[general laughter]**
12. **R: That's good. [pause] So this is the faculty folding their arms, is it?**
13. **S4: I say it's more that kind of the Business School Director.**
14. **R: Yeah.**
15. **S4: Kind of not getting the results.**

Large size and scale/anonymity

Figure 14.2 portrayed the school as overweight because of large student numbers linked to the financial imperative through maximizing fee income. Figure 14.3 showed the school as a load



Figure 14.4 Group free-drawn personality image: MBA students

too great for the leader to manage and many drawings referred to a sense of anonymity partly related to size, but with faculty, staff and students believing they had little voice because of the sense of disenfranchisement. An MBA group showed the school building as too small, with the roof pressing down on the character's head:

Figure 14.4 Extract 2: MBA focus group

1. S1: I suppose we should have great big looking feet, 'cause there's too
2. many sort of little legs in great big shoes: students to teachers.
3. S2: I think this building is too small for a lot of people in it. I would have
4. made it really cramped, like bending down. And all because I just
5. think that [pause] the building can't accommodate this amount of
6. people.
7. S3: Yeah.
8. S4: Make it a box just pressing down. [S5 draws low roof]
9. S6: Oh, you are brilliant.
10. S1: Yeah. He'd crack his if he puts his head there.

Fragmentation

The idea of a split personality involved the school projecting contradictory characteristics internally and externally: most often expressed as a fundamental academic versus business mismatch. Conflicts between normative and utilitarian multiple identities were felt to result in a

fragmented organizational identity, reminiscent of Elsbach's (2001) idea of schizo-identification. People actively articulated the idea of a split personality, with the character's portrayal suggesting a lack of belief in the business-oriented image the school portrayed through its publicity documents. Conflict between identities was intensified by the financial imperative, research prioritization and perceived disenfranchisement. Fabrications generally conveyed a sense of uncertainty as to the long-term strategies of the school, with the leader not providing a clear vision and fragmentation meaning individuals and groups pursued their own goals within extreme resource constraints and disenfranchised decision processes. Figure 14.2 articulates the notion of schizo-identification:

Figure 14.2 Extract 2: Darren (lecturer)

1. **D: I see the business school as essentially a schizophrenic organization but on**
2. **the one half you have got the sort of very academic academics who are sort**
3. **of favour the long hair, and the Levis 501s and trainers and the other hand**
4. **you have got the business academics who favour the suits and sort of pseudo**
5. **businessmen look and I think that is something that that is one of the things**
6. **that struck me when I first came.**

Maleness

Pictures also reflected perceived gender imbalance at the school, based mainly on an overwhelming proportion of male faculty – although the influence of the male leader was also mentioned in Figure 14.4. The business side of the split personalities was also widely regarded as male, in contrast to the more balanced academic side. Male pronouns proliferated when describing the character, which usually had masculine clothing. The MBA focus group (Figure 14.4) reflected that:

Figure 14.4 Extract 3: MBA focus group

1. **S1: There's no females here.**
2. **S2: We don't have this many females, do we?**
3. **S3: Any teachers?**
4. **S1: No.**
5. **S3: Are they kidding?**
6. **S4: Really unbelievable.**
7. **S5: No, not really.**
8. **S1: There's [names female academic], but that's about the only female.**
9. **R: [pause] Yeah. Alright.**
10. **S5: And what type of business school, business joke. Your**
11. **mind really blows this mainly male world, you know? Mine does**
12. **anyway.**

Overall, different images appeared to different stakeholders, but portrayed a generic identity of neutrality-unhappiness underpinned by these interwoven themes. Pictorial and textual discourse helped reveal competing images integral to the process of defining multiple organizational identities. Although confidentiality precludes giving specific details, specific research, teaching, marketing communication and human resource objectives and strategies were developed to address identity issues arising from this analysis. However, the researcher may be more concerned with helping stakeholders understand the organization's identities; gaining insights into

how specific organizational activities, such as research, are conducted (Bryans and Mavin 2006); articulating feelings about organizational change (Kearney and Hyle 2004; Vince and Broussine 1996); or developing theory about wider social change (Stiles 2011).

Conclusion and future developments

This chapter has shown that, provided care is taken to address five research principles, drawing methods provide an accessible and flexible metaphor-based way of surfacing identities and other organizational aspects that alternative verbal and visual methods may find more difficult. Unlike conventional semiotic approaches, asking people to draw and explain their own images and presenting the resulting discourse through the relay principle decentres the researcher from the role of expert in judging what the drawer is conveying. It also helps avoid accusations of reification – that one is treating the personality drawing itself as real. In connecting individual and group level images within an organization, pictorial representation provides a bridge between different levels of analysis.

The simplicity and flexibility of pictorial representation is also to some extent its future-proofing. Film, video and other media also offer great possibilities for exploring organization and social processes (e.g. Heath and Luff 1997); but computer tablets, cloud computing, social networking and online journals also provide potential routes for the production and dissemination of drawings about organizations. These will become more important: tablet-based ‘apps’ already allow drawing via an intuitive touchscreen or stylus and camera-ready artwork for publications. Indeed, I experimented with ‘pocket PC’ devices in the early 2000s with prototypical drawing software, and currently use four drawing apps on my iPad. However, using more sophisticated image technology does not necessarily bring greater expression and may place unnecessary barriers between researcher and subject. Leonard (see Chapter 20, this volume) has already noted that the amateurish simplicity of video images involving such devices as stick people may help clarify messages in a way that more sophisticated technical products find difficult. Drawing using pen and paper allows one of the most direct, simple, first-hand modes of engagement with people. Even where technology such as compact cameras and cell phones enhances the first-hand construction and sharing of photographs and video, drawing will maintain an advantage as a viable ‘low-tech’ research approach. Taking a creative photograph or video of an organization requires greater knowledge and skills in image composition and manipulation than a simple line drawing.

Analysing the many website images being posted provides opportunities to research social discourse in new ways. Yet, positioning the researcher as an expert analyst risks ignoring or diminishing the voices that construct these images. Such images may also be disappointing in the depth of insight they provide. It is, of course, true that social media are employing image in ways that are both creative and unpredictable – as the Free Range Studios cases in this volume show (Bell and McArthur Chapter 23; Leonard Chapter 20). However, it is also the case that simplistic organizational stereotypes may inhibit deeper analysis – such as presenting CEOs as fat-bellied, money-fixated or giant, robotic characters. Issues of establishing authenticity make the analysis of social media images particularly problematic. In addition, most Internet images are currently used within routine activities such as sharing pictures of friends and families, email, seeking everyday information through search engines, and social networking (US Census 2011). No more than a third of young people – often seen as the most Internet-savvy demographic – have done anything more creative than set up a social networking page, pass comment on a website or construct a music playlist (Holmes 2011). Future social networking may involve people producing more critical first-hand web images about their social and organizational worlds; but

a lack of more advanced imaging skills and motivation may mean most people are content to show personal snapshots. Recent concerns about employers' surveillance of employees' Internet activities (Halpern *et al.* 2008) provide another reason why more critical organizational images may only be revealed by the intervention of specific research projects.

Advancing the research agenda in drawing means applying methods in many more contexts, since only a handful of organizations have been explored. Longitudinal studies, such as the one outlined here, are also needed to show how identities and other social phenomena change over time. Although grounded theory means drawings are collected up to the point where no new themes emerge, researchers should ensure appropriate numbers of images are constructed to address the particular research question. Care must be taken to ensure the analysis process is robust, with researchers showing systematically how themes emerge directly from extracts and drawings, using respondents' own voices. Using other accessible and widely recognized metaphors besides personality may add important dimensions to work. While animals may, for example, have universal appeal (Stiles 2004b), people may find it more difficult to see their organization as a type of car or vegetable. Ultimately, drawings have great potential to add insights into our understanding of organizational and social processes; and researchers would be wise to consider this most ancient, universal and adaptable means of human expression.

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