

**The Pencil is Mightier than the Word:
Sketching organisational portraits of business schools
in Britain and Canada**

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Summary

As management researchers seek ever more lucid means of analysing organisations, image is at last beginning to challenge the supremacy of the written word. Yet, despite fifteen-thousand years of art history, the use of image as a scientific instrument is still in its embryonic stages. This paper explores the origins and use of pictorial representation as an innovative research technique for the exploration of organisational constructs. Beginning with a review of the academic use of image, the epistemological roots for pictorial representation are then uncovered: to help provide a firmer theoretical foundation for using image in management. Next, the reader is shown how pictorial representation fits into an holistic analytical framework. Subsequently, the methodology is applied in a 'live' situation, with glimpses provided of the strategic use of pictorial representation in British and Canadian business schools. Data from the project are presented to illustrate how image can be applied to practical strategy formulation and implementation. Overall, it is felt that images can be valuable as vehicles for exploring people's organisational constructs. Although words may still be the most favoured means of organisational analysis, in the quest for a richer understanding of organisations, images should certainly not be ignored.

Introduction: Pictures and Words

The power of image has long fuelled the stuff of artists, art-therapists and advertising agencies. Cave drawings of animal and human representations, sometimes rich in detail and imagination, precede by millenia even the most ancient of recorded texts. Today, from the moment we rise from our beds, we are bombarded with images through television, the press and advertising billboards. Commercial organisations spend billions: claiming to be as majestic and dynamic as

tigers, as adaptable as chameleons or as high-flying as eagles. Even in the less ethereal world of learned management texts, illustrations, charts and diagrams serve to summarise, clarify and enrich verbal arguments. Computer graphics now allow anyone with access to a personal computer to produce technically sophisticated images. Even if our drawing or painting abilities do not quite equal those of the great masters of art, we are at least becoming image literate.

Pictures have never just been means of decoration. They have often been used to convey meaning. The function of even these earliest works was not simply to provide a value-free means of pleasing the eye. As the art historian Gombrich recognises, bison and reindeer representations found in caves in Altamira, Spain and Font de Gaume, France were believed to possess magical powers in subduing their mirrored prey. One story of a modern European artist making drawings of an African tribe's cattle relates how he was met with great distress on the part of the tribespeople: "If you take them away with you, what are we to live on?". (Gombrich, 1967, p.20).

This paper is unusual for two reasons. Firstly, it aims to provide an initial exploration of the research possibilities of image in management theory. Starting with a brief review of the use of pictorial representation in the academic world, it continues with a short discussion of the epistemological roots for pictorial representation. It then places image within a conceptual framework for holistic organisational analysis. The subsequent section gives an overview of a methodology currently in use in analysing internal organisational processes in British and Canadian business schools. Data from the project are then presented to illustrate its practical use in strategy formulation and implementation; with the final part briefly examining generalisable conclusions for use of the methodology.

The second reason for this paper's novelty is its disciplinary origin. Although it relies for its epistemological foundation upon organisational theory; the author arrives with a strategic management background. Concepts from social psychology, political sociology and even art

theory provide for a truly integrative approach. Perhaps this is what the 'crafting of management research' is really all about. After all, although it is necessary to provide a theoretical basis for using images in management research, the emphasis is as much upon its practical application in organisational strategy. This should be of particular value to this audience, since the methodology is being applied to business schools in Britain and Canada. Following the Canadian Smith (1991) Report and the May 1991 British Government White Paper (Cmnd 1541, 1991), university business schools are facing increasing requirements to plan strategically. Image, it will be seen, can provide a valuable instrument in assisting this process.

The Use of Image in Academic Research

As their users quickly recognised, as well as a mystical quality, pictures often have the ability to communicate rapidly and universally, with or without verbal interaction; to record and summarise ideas; and, as marketing research shows, to influence the perceptions and even the behaviour of actors (Kotler, 1986, ch.12). Yet the use of image in management research has, until recently, been very limited. Subjectivity in interpretation is one explanation for this, as are extreme variations in drawing ability, and - before the advent of electronic scanning devices - technical publishing difficulties. Perhaps a more fundamental reason in a largely positivistic academic domain, however, is the unfashionability of using a medium which is not only non-numerical, but also non-verbal.

Yet, the use of image as an academic instrument is evident, to a greater or lesser extent, in three main branches of human knowledge: art and the aesthetic disciplines, the psychological sciences, and the social sciences. Management theory is at last beginning to draw from this work.

A large part of art theory is, of course, based on pictorial representation and interpretation of the function of image. As analysts show, merely achieving an aesthetic design is not the sole

function of painters or drawers - and this has filtered through into the realms of architecture and design. Gombrich's (1967) classic history examines the development of art from prehistoric to modern times and concludes that art has been both a product of the specific culture of each time and place and an intrinsic part of that culture itself. The Renaissance art historian Vasari instead believed that painting's only function was the plausible rendition of nature (Gombrich, 1982); whilst the neo-Marxist Hadjinicolaou (1978) argues instead that art and art history reflect the ideology of the ruling class. Whether such ideas still hold in what is a currently highly fragmented art world is debatable, but as Gombrich (1982, p.143) expounds, "The real value of the image, however, is its capacity to convey information that cannot be coded in any other way". More succinctly, he contends that, far from serving to purely imitate nature, pictures have an unmatched capacity for arousal, and an important function as a vehicle for expression.

Psychology and its related disciplines have also recognised the potential of image. Oscar Wilde's (1974 edition) "The Picture of Dorian Gray" informs us that "Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter". This is the essence of projective techniques in psychotherapy: that pictures drawn by the subject will reveal some previously-inarticulated personal anxiety. Clinical psychotherapy bases its use of drawing on Freudian theories of repression, which hold that human beings tend to suppress unpalatable thoughts and emotions in a way that internalises tension. Projective tests such as the Rorschach inkblot, Thematic Apperception Tests, Szondi, and 'World' Techniques are designed to reveal these anxieties, ready for identification and treatment. (Semeonoff, 1976; Branthwaite and Lunn, 1985). Some neurophysiologists believe that visual, spatial, arational thought processes are localised in specific areas of the brain - the right cerebral hemisphere - whereas verbal, logical, rational processes are localised in the left hemisphere. To ensure complementarity in thinking, it is conjectured that both parts of the brain need to be activated - which necessitates using images in addition to words when researching people's perceptions. (Ornstein, 1977).

Competing neurophysiological theories, such as Pribram's (1981) holographic model, contest the degree of brain function localisation, but most recognise the importance of visual and verbal processing abilities in human beings.

In the social and management sciences, image has always been the poor relative of verbal expression. Examples do, however, exist of its use as a research medium. Spatial geographers have used cognitive mapping to explore people's perceptions of their location relative to aspects of their environment (Downs & Stea, 1977). In marketing and strategic management, Mintzberg (1988) emphasises the importance of arational, visual processes in the creative side of strategy formulation; and Maddox et al (1987) describe how 'guided imagery' can be used in practice. This includes guidelines in conducting a visual internal marketing audit of an organisation's strengths and weaknesses; in creating scenarios for environmental forecasting; and in prompting senior managers to project key organisational goals into the future. Huff (1990) also provides a collection of papers on the application of visual mapping techniques to strategy; and Majaro (1991) briefly relates a variant of metaphorical analysis, which he describes as 'visual metaphorical analogy'. By using pictures instead of merely words, he attempts to use a non-positivistic route to problem-solving. Such exercises tend to be conducted in the pre-testing stage of television advertisements, where the imaging of existing perceptions of companies and brands and the exploration of alternative visual treatments is important (Kotler, 1986). Organisational researchers, too, have begun to explore image. Checkland (1981) and Checkland and Scholes (1990) look at developing 'rich pictures' in soft systems methodology to capture organisational problems. In his latest text, Morgan examines the use of visual metaphors in exploring organisational problems (Morgan, 1993).

Lately, an embryonic and reasonably integrated management research area has begun to emerge in the use of image, synthesising elements of social and psychological sciences and recent developments in the management disciplines. Forming a burgeoning subset of 'creative

management', visual techniques are being developed to stimulate creative thinking and problem solving. (Rickards, 1988; Russell and Evans, 1989; Henry, 1991). Such developments point towards a burgeoning interest in the use of image as a research instrument in the 1990s.

Pictorial Representation and Management Theory

Though largely inexplicit at present, an epistemological basis for pictorial representation can be found in the philosophical reaction against scientific positivism. Positivism is based on the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm of mechanistic science (Grof, 1985). However, as Capra (1982) has noted, Einstein's notion of relativity has undermined many absolutes in physical science. Further, as Feyerabend (1978) argues, science is not and cannot be governed by a system of static, absolute principles.

Such an anti-positivist reaction has been mirrored in the world of social science. Wittgenstein (1964) argues that there is no unambiguous distinction between subjective and objective spheres. Human beings, to a large extent, through words, images and ideas create their own realities; so that such expressive vehicles cannot be value-free representations of reality. More recently, Bohm (1980) has argued that reality and consciousness is a coherent whole involved in an unending process of change. Heidegger (1978) promotes the view that language, as one such means of expression, is not neutral; whilst the 'social constructionist' school, embodied in the work of Berger and Luckman (1965) and Weick (1979) argues that individuals and groups can experience the same reality in different ways. People, they argue, form their own 'social constructions' or 'enactments' - shared perceptions that serve to reconstruct the reality they have experienced. This is in contrast to the passive role positivists see human beings adopting in the scientific process. In essence, as Clegg (1989, p.138) observes, "Voluntaristic social theories, such as ethnomethodology or phenomenology, concentrate upon human agency as knowledgeable, creative and constitutive".

If, then, reality is 'constructable', it seems a reasonable goal for social research to try to explore such constructs, in an attempt to understand what underlies human action (assuming, of course, that there is a link between perceptions and behaviour). As Wittgenstein's reasoning implies, this means studying not only human ideas and expressions as verbal constructs, but also as visual imagery.

Following in this anti-positivist tradition, pictorial representation aims to use metaphor to examine such constructs. The Oxford Encyclopedic Dictionary defines a 'metaphor' as "The application of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable" (Hawkins and Allen, 1991). The emphasis on imaginative knowledge rather than literality is important, since pictorial representation thereby avoids the temptation of seeking the kind of literal truth that positivism stresses. Morgan (1986) suggests that we all have images of organisations inside our heads which are not carbon copies of what we see, but are metaphors. Some of these are in widespread use - for example, we may view the firm as a machine, as a growing being, or even as a prison. Similarly, managers often see themselves as a team - when often things could not be further from the truth! Metaphorical analysis is about trying to use metaphors to try and explore familiar things like organisations in a new way. It is about imagining the organisation is something else and using this new set of perceptions to help break out of existing mind-sets - and look at the problem from a different angle.

Metaphors abound in strategic management. We are by now familiar with thinking of organisations as 'cash cows', 'stars', 'dogs' and 'problem children'. Other metaphors, such as 'defenders' and 'prospectors', abound in the strategy literature. (Miles & Snow, 1978). Such techniques are well-used in strategy formulation, with prescribed strategies given for dealing with particular metaphors (eg. 'milk' a cash cow; invest in a star). However, these methods are now so over-used, that they create their own mind sets. It is difficult, for example, to look at

alternative strategies once it is decided that a company, division or product is a cash cow. The tendency is to automatically think that 'milking' the 'cow' for cash (ie maximising revenue) is the only strategic option available.

Metaphors, however, can be used to analyse organisations in a way that is both novel and insightful. Schein (1985) and Morgan (1989) both suggest viewing the organisation as a complex multi-layered phenomenon, rather than a simple unitary entity - and this can itself be used as a framework for exploring underlying organisational phenomena. In recent years, culture itself has proven a useful metaphor in organisational analysis. Schein (1985) argues that an holistic understanding of intra-organisational processes should involve the penetration of successive layers of organisational culture; whilst Morgan (1989, p.157) urges the analyst to penetrate beneath visible rituals, ceremonies and symbolic routines to discover "Innermost values and assumptions that lend meaning to the outward aspects of the culture". As Schall (1983, p.557) states, although definitions of organisational culture are often ambiguous and contradictory, analysts do appear to share common ground in regarding culture as "A relatively enduring, interdependent symbolic system of values, beliefs, and assumptions evolving from and imperfectly shared by interacting organizational members". Implicit here is the understanding that an organisation contains a 'deeper' level of embedded phenomena. Again, deeper-set human constructs are seen to reside towards bottom of the organisational mind-set. The penetration of this deeper level seems significant to organisational theorists. If values, perceptions and other organisational processes can be examined in an integrated way, we might come significantly closer to understanding how particular organisations are culturally constructed; and thereby suggest which organisational change strategies are most likely to succeed.

Lukes (1974) proposes that power may exist in society in layers, or 'dimensions'. These he describes as 'overt' (observable, behavioural, authority-based power), 'covert' (the hidden

exercise of interests, involving the mobilisation of bias) and 'latent' (the contextual influence of inexplicit assumptions). Integrating such ideas with cultural concepts, allows the analyst a more holistic organisational perspective than the cultural metaphor alone provides. If one also adds a further dimension - time - to permit a dynamic interpretation of organisational structures and processes; culture and politics become concepts more readily linked with long-term strategic planning. Pettigrew (1979) provides a conceptual link between organisational culture and the temporal dimension; arguing that longitudinal studies, such as the identification and analysis of 'social dramas', are fundamentally important. He later suggests that dynamic studies should try to identify 'embeddedness', 'inter-temporal connectedness', 'context' and 'action' (Pettigrew, 1990). Certainly, the concept of 'embeddedness' involves the implicit acceptance of several organisational layers. Similarly, Van de Ven (1987, p.331) conceptualises change as "An empirical observation of differences in time on one or more dimensions of an entity"; whilst the process of change is described as "An inference of a latent pattern of differences noted in time". Such ideas are firmly grounded in a multi-layered metaphor. Others have argued that the identification of events, congruences, breakpoints, reoccurrences and continuities are vital in studying organisational change (Nadler and Tushman, 1982; Rosenfeld et al, 1989). As long as this occurs, an holistic perspective is easier to achieve - and organisational change strategies are more likely to be successful.

This, then, is the conceptual basis of the methodology: a multi-layered exploration of organisational processes descending through the overt dimension (attitudes, observable behaviour, readily quantifiable organisational characteristics), via the covert layer (hidden political and social interaction) to the latent dimension (unchallenged contextual and personal assumptions and perceptions) - over a time dimension. Pictorial representation itself, it is argued, is an important part of the latent aspects of the methodology. By stimulating subjects to explore visual perceptions, this may lead to a more holistic interpretation of organisational

processes. Pictures provide a vehicle to enable people to express in visual form what may be difficult to communicate in verbal form. In essence, pictorial representation creates an additional means of 'tapping' the innermost, or 'latent', organisational layer, by exploring the social constructs of organisational members.

An Outline Methodology

Crafting this particular piece of management research has involved developing a methodology to reflect the multi-layered metaphor above. Consequently, pictorial representation is not the only research technique used in this study. Quantitative and qualitative techniques are applied in an attempt to explore organisational processes, value systems and perceptual constructs. In keeping with Whyte et al's (1991) definition of 'Participatory Action Research' (PAR), the study involves mutual interaction with organisational members in developing the research design. The project also includes observing, participating in and recording processes of strategy formulation; and the analysis of existing strategic plans, memos, publicity material, historical archives and other secondary data. Primary data are obtained from a more formal research instrument, which utilises extensive face-to-face interviews with business school participants. Likert scales help in assessing covert attitudes towards the official, stated objectives; whilst political processes are targeted with specialised questions. Discourse analysis of all qualitative comment (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) helps identify particular areas where strategy implementation may be more problematic because of disagreement over particular goals. Amongst more quantitative instruments used, a modified Rokeach values ranking exercise is conducted, based on specially-developed lists of academic values (Rokeach, 1968). In addition, cluster analysis explores both values and demographic data to determine whether definable homogenous groups of organisational members occur (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984). A more detailed explanation of the entire methodology is published elsewhere (Stiles, 1992).

Yet, it is with pictorial representation that we are more concerned with here. Two pictorial techniques are included in the interview instrument: a free drawing exercise based on depicting the organisation as a personality metaphor; and card-selection, incorporating representations of animal characteristics. The latent free drawing exercise is the most unstructured of all. Although following Edwards' (1981) suggestions for drawing "warm-ups"; the final drawing is done by the respondent with no prompting beyond a request to represent the "personality of the business school".

Interpretation of free drawings is made by the respondents themselves immediately after they have been completed: not by the interviewer. This limits the researcher's structuring to mostly innocuous probes and non-verbal cues, themselves transcribed in full. Interpretation is based on respondents' verbal explanations of their own drawings and follows Potter & Wetherell's (1987) suggested discourse analysis approach. Patterns are sought in the data relating to i) variability, and ii) consistency between the answers given by respondents to the same question. Variability relates to differences in either the form or content of answers across respondents. Consistencies are similarities in either. Hypotheses are also drawn concerning the functions and effects of verbal responses and perceptions. Note that consistent themes emerging across the selected cards and drawings are more important than the pictures themselves, since these reveal the organisation's latent characteristics rather than concentrate on the visual metaphors stimulating these perceptions. However, data are considerably enriched for the reader when the images are viewed in conjunction with the verbal explanations.

A card-selection exercise also aims to explore the use of visual metaphor, by asking respondents to select one or more animal cards placed before them at random in a 4 X 4 square. The cards chosen are those deemed by the respondent to "come closest to representing the business school". Again to avoid criticisms of imposing the interviewer's own subjective interpretation of choices upon the situation; the respondent is asked to explain his/her choice. It

is this explanation which is then subject to the discourse analysis methodology above. Cards can also be scored on the basis of rank order, allowing mean, modal and frequency distributions, correlations with precoded data and cluster analyses. However, in keeping with the methodology's epistemological principles, discourse analysis is the primary means of interpretation. Each animal is included on the cards because it represents a unique set of characteristics as originally generated by five independent academic subjects not included in the main study. However, to ensure accurate interpretation, the subject's own explanations are taken as overriding any of the hypothesised characteristics.

Initial analysis of all data results in a draft report examining organisational processes at each business school in four-dimensions (the descriptive element); the strategic implications of the project findings for each school; and wider implications for strategic planning. Before a final report is prepared, and following Schall's (1983) suggestions, initial data are presented to focus groups consisting of stakeholders in the business school. Representative groups are selected to a) review and validate initial interview data; b) determine, again using pictures, both 'realistic' and 'ideal' views of their organisations; and c) filter previously emerging suggestions on possible strategies, and generate alternatives. The use of focus groups also serves to ensure members continue to be involved in the process of strategy formulation beyond initial interviews.

Picturing Business Schools in Britain and Canada

This section illustrates the use of pictorial representation by presenting interview data relating to two case study business schools, one in Canada (37 interviews) and the other in Britain (39 interviews). The free-drawing personality metaphor exercise reveals some fascinating perceptions. These are best understood by viewing the images reproduced in Appendix A in conjunction with the analysis below. The drawings here comprise only one-quarter of the total; since space precludes reproducing the entire set. However, these have been selected as

representative of common themes that emerge across images, derived from respondents' verbal explanations. Such themes equate with perceived organisational strengths and problems. These are then refined and explored in subsequent focus groups, to form the basis of an internal strategic audit, from which more precise strategic solutions are sought. Amongst positive consistencies, the British business school personality is often drawn with baseball shoes, representing a feeling that it is a young institution. In addition, the figure is often drawn holding a coffee cup, symbolising a generally relaxing environment (Image 7). However, a further element is also commonly introduced, represented by either speed (Image 3) or a shirt rolled-down to the waist and a shovel (Image 8); showing a periodically-intense pace of work. The character is also consistently shown with a scientific prop - such as a white laboratory coat (Image 5) or a briefcase marked 'research-led growth (Image 2); indicating that research is felt to be a clear, major goal of the institution. On the negative side, this is also felt to be too much of a preoccupation, with students disregarded - either 'dropped' in favour of books (research) (Image 1), or unable to reach the academic hidden behind a transparent door (Image 5). Also negatively, the UK school character is overwhelmingly depicted as male; reflecting a male-dominated faculty that many felt to be an imbalance. Most interviewees also drew a mouth that appears either downturned or as a straight line. In fact in none of drawings was the personality smiling. This was explained to be due to a sense of disenfranchisement, in that the Director was felt to be omnipotent as far as resource and policy decisions were concerned. In one drawing this was emphasised by the distance between the Director of the School (depicted as a head on a long neck) and the remainder of the staff (the faraway body) (Image 9). In others, a character preoccupied with money emerged - as shown by pound signs in its eyes (Image 5). Respondents mostly clothed their figure in a business suit, which was verbalised as a form of conventionality or respectability. However, it was also suggested several times that there was a hidden,

mismatched side to this apparel: that the suit was either ill-fitting or fairly scruffy, showing a general disbelief in the externally-projected professionalism of the School (Image 10).

The free drawing exercise at the Canadian School generally reveals a fairly young, medium-sized, reasonably intellectual, fairly conservative character. Although maleness is the most popular gender characteristic, it is not perceived to be a great organisational problem. However, the figure is also felt to be unsmiling - which verbal explanations indicate is due to perceptions of relatively weak organisational performance, especially in research terms. In addition, there is a very strong perceived difference in the treatment of contractual and non-contractual faculty, with the former group seen as receiving unfavourable teaching and research terms; and denied resource and other requests by the Dean in return (Image 17). Some of these have, in consequence, packed their cases ready to leave when the opportunity arises (Image 19). A tension also emerges over formality versus informality, with some faculty perceived as being inapproachable - perhaps clothed in barbed wire (Image 14). Also arising as a perceived problem is a sense of organisational directionless; portrayed as fuzziness (Images 12 and 18), a boat being rowed in different directions (Image 13), or as a person suffering from role conflict (Image 20). Many faculty felt there were no real strategic objectives for the business school.

These data are supplemented and reinforced by the animal metaphor card selection exercise. When selections are ranked in order of most popular choice, the chameleon, fox and owl cards appear joint first for the British business school. The chameleon card is chosen because its external image of efficiency contradicts the perceived internal reality of inefficient systems and procedures. The fox, like the snake, is deemed to portray some cunning or astute element in relation to its establishment. The owl is largely chosen for wisdom, although some feel that this is still embryonic. At the Canadian school, the dog is the most popular selection because obedience, faithfulness, honesty and reliability are perceived to characterise members. However, the dog/school is also seen as being relatively ordinary compared to other

organisations and subject to inaction - certainly less positive attributes. The cat, whilst exhibiting affectionate leanings, is likened to the school by respondents because of its unpredictable or opportunistic nature. This is considered to be representative of one or more individuals currently associated with or attempting to gain positions of formal power. The dolphin is picked because it is seen, like the school, to exhibit a degree of intelligence and playfulness; but it is also felt to represent some degree of insularity.

Interestingly, these findings also seem consistent with academic studies of the prevailing societal cultures of the two countries. Hofstede's seminal (1980) work suggested that the British are less risk-averse, and display more individualistic and masculine characteristics than their Canadian counterparts. In this study, British academics appear as changeable, cunning and astute; whilst Canadian scholars seem faithful, good-natured, feminine, warm and playful! Certainly one would expect some degree of each institution's respective external culture to be reflected, since type of organisation has been 'controlled for', but societal setting 'varied'. However, sufficient data emerge in the free-drawing exercise to suggest particular internal organisational strengths and weaknesses. Further analysis is, of course, possible, based on correlating characteristics expressed through both drawings and cards with variables such as age, sex, academic discipline, and so on. However, even at this level, problems and strengths identified with the aid of pictures have helped in both institutions to build a more comprehensive internal strategic audit.

Respondents in both schools also articulated their ideal organisational images: useful in contrasting with perceptual realities during subsequent focus groups. In the British case, the dolphin appears popular because of its grace, intelligence and associations with quality. The lion also emerges, due to its perceived astuteness, ferociousness in the market and its internal strength/cohesiveness. In the Canadian school, the eagle is easily the most popular ideal image. This represents a bird of vision; a powerful and respected monarch of all that it surveys,

scanning its environment and making rapid decisions. It is also felt to look after its young and build its own nest, representing an additional, caring side.

Conclusions: The Art of the Possible

Ambrose Bierce (1909-12) once wrote that painting is little more than "The art of protecting flat surfaces from the weather and exposing them to the critic". Certainly, as reaction to this paper may illustrate, the former kind of exposure is probably less erosive than the latter.

In fact, both pictorial techniques explained here have proven invaluable as vehicles for exploring people's perceptions of their own organisations' strengths and weaknesses. Facets have emerged that were not evident in the extensive preceding verbal sessions, despite intensive questioning. For example, the ostrich card was seized by one respondent, who was then able to articulate the perceived strategic directionless of the British school. Such 'head-in-the-sand' insularity had not been previously expressed. One Canadian academic selected the donkey card to represent his peers because of the 'braying or noise-making' he associated with them. Such frankness had not previously been so forthcoming. Where themes had previously emerged, pictorial representation provided a useful means of summarising the main concerns of respondents. In addition, a light-hearted approach was often taken to these exercises, which certainly promoted a relaxed discussion of the organisations. The images also served to focus minds for subsequent group discussions, proving easily communicable and ice-breaking for participants. When selected drawings were fed-back into these sessions, it was remarkable how many groups from the same organisation ultimately chose the same image.

Ultimately, although a firm epistemological foundation is essential, the true test of pictorial representation is in the field. Certainly, the technique has proven useful in this study as a means of exploring latent perceptions, and as a bridge to more creative strategy formulation and

implementation. This indicates that pictorial representation - when used in conjunction with verbal discourse analysis - may indeed be a useful aid in the strategic planning process. Whilst it is unlikely that this cursory exploration of image in management research will significantly alter those with more positivistic outlooks, it is hoped that some eager researchers will be tempted to explore less-orthodox alternatives to the written word.

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Appendix A (i): Selected Personality Metaphor Images of British Business School

Image 1



Image 2

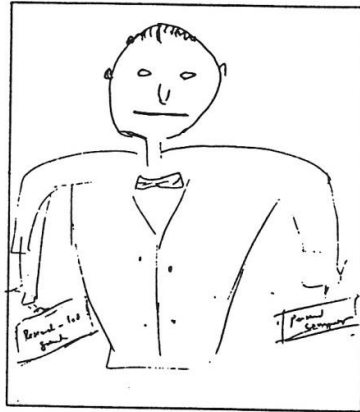


Image 3

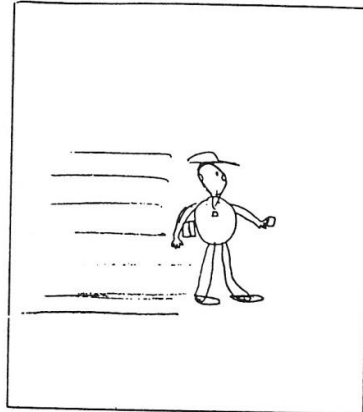


Image 4

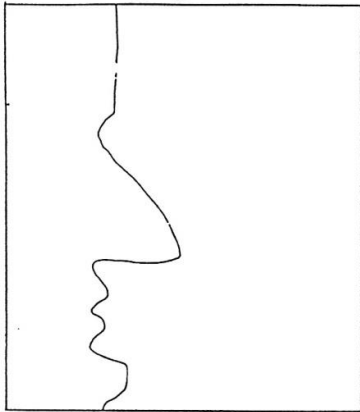


Image 5

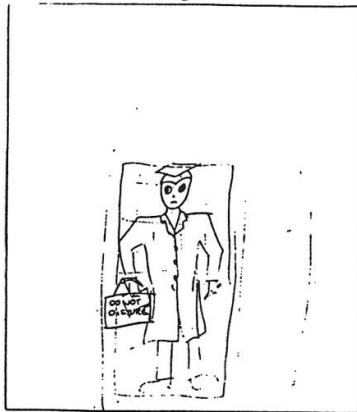


Image 6



Image 7

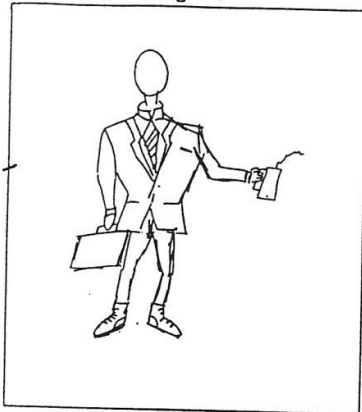


Image 8

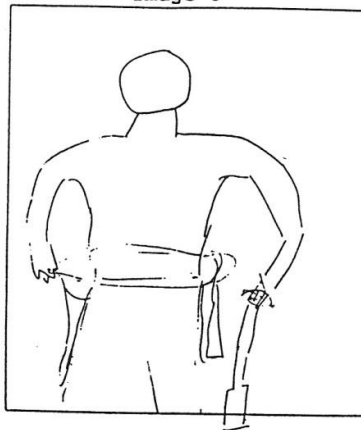


Image 9

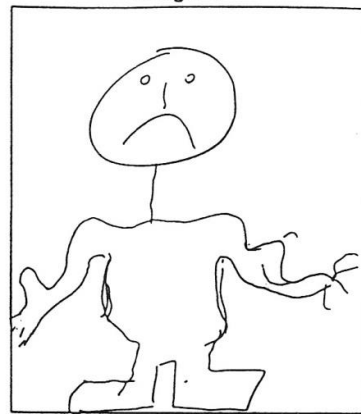
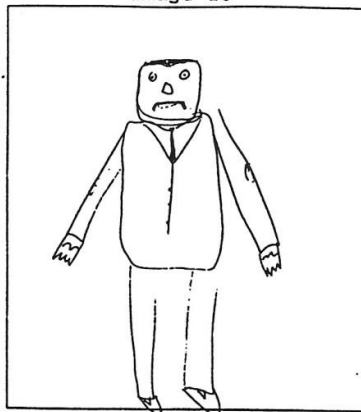


Image 10



Appendix A (ii): Selected Personality Metaphor Images of Canadian Business School

Image 11

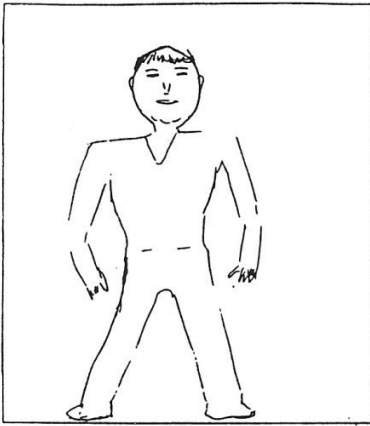


Image 12

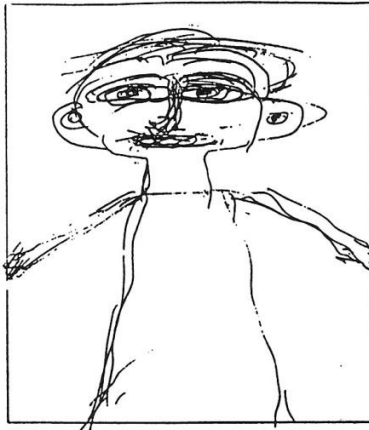


Image 13

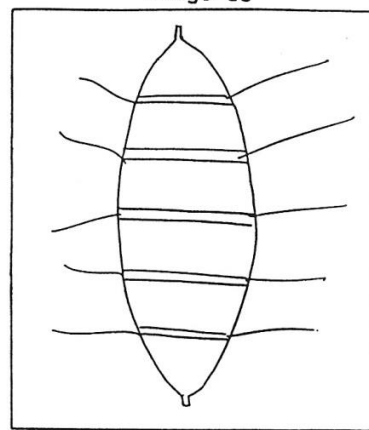


Image 14

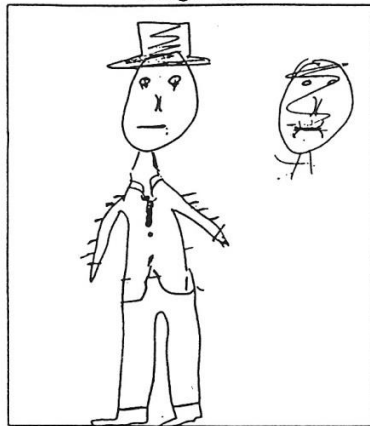


Image 15

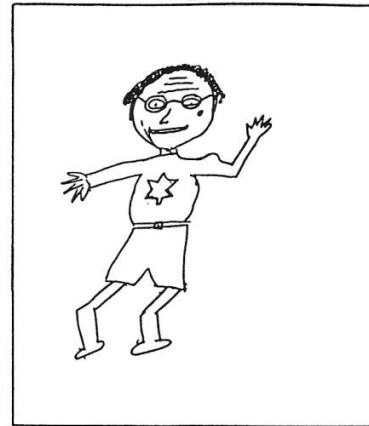


Image 16

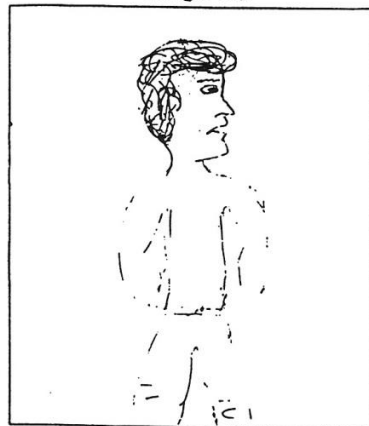


Image 17



Image 18



Image 19



Image 20

