The Story of the ASB History

Despite the fact that ASB conferences have been held annually since 1971, by the onset of the 21st century there was no history to speak of. There were, however, histories of the national Administrative Sciences Association of Canada (ASAC)[1] and the US-based Academy of Management (AoM).[2] There were, nonetheless, unexpected factors that were influencing the idea of a history of the Atlantic Schools of Business (ASB).

The year of 2000 saw the establishment of a PhD program at the Frank H. Sobey School of Commerce (later to become known as the Sobey School of Business). One of the core courses of the program was the study and application of Qualitative Research Methods, which, from the beginning, included an empirical study. That study usually required students to undertake a number of interviews and reflections on the influence of those interviews on knowledge production. Meantime, around 2005, some of the faculty and students of the course were becoming interested in the role of history in management and organization studies and, alongside this, the absence of a history of the ASB. In the process the final course assignment shifted from a focus on interviews to a study of the history of ASB. Basically, so as to not influence how such a history could be structured, students were required to undertake a history using their preferred qualitative methods.

One of the main outcomes of this exercise, in addition to a grade for the course, was the development of a range of papers that could be submitted to forthcoming ASB annual conferences. Almost all the submitted papers were accepted for presentation at the requisite conference and a majority of those papers were also accepted for inclusion in the conference proceedings. At least one of the papers was accepted for presentation at the International Critical Management Studies conference[3] and at least five other papers were published in scholarly management journals[4]. An Executive MBA thesis, based on the data from the various papers, was also produced, winning the author a Gold Medal.[5]

The qualitative methods used in these studies present a range of perspectives on how the past is produced as history (2010) and, in the process reveals a rich trove of stories (and histories) of the Atlantic Schools of Business. The qualitative research methods drawn upon by the various students and faculty involved, include narrative analysis (Barragan & Mills, 2008), feminist analysis (Sanderson & Mills, 2010), hermeneutics (Campbell, 2007); actor-network theory (Durepos, 2006), modernist histography (Haddon & Mills, 2008), ANTi-History (Hartt, 2009), Critical Hermeneutic Analysis (Long, 2006); institution theory (Long et al., 2008); amodernist history (MacNeil & Mills, 2015), critical discourse analysis (McLaren & Mills, 2008), organization theory (Parsons & Mills, 2008), critical accounting (Secord & Corrigan, 2015), netnography (Shengelia & Mills, 2006) and postmodernist history (Yue et al., 2006).

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[1] See Austin (1994, 1995, 1998, 2000a, 2000b).
[2] See Wrege (1986); Grant & Mills (2006); Myrick, Helms Mills, & Mills (2013)
[3] See Yue, Durepos, McLeod, & Mills, (2006)
[4] See Long, Pyper & Rostis (2008);MacNeil & Mills (2015); McLaren & Mills (2008); Mills (2005); McLaren Genoe, Campbell, Rostis, & Murray, (2014)
[5] Steeves (2015)

Far from resulting in a confusion of voices and conflicting accounts we hope that the different perspectives constitute an ANTi-History of ASB that provides various clues to the various actors and events associated with ASB over time. ANTi-History (Durepos & Mills, 2012) is an approach to history that simultaneously values histories of the past while questioning the possibility of telling but one true tale. Rather, ANTi-History seeks to uncover untold stories – stories that can vary depending on the author/historian; his or her starting point for a given history; and the context and time in which he or she are constructing the history. To that end, we reproduce a selection of the papers on ASB's history that have been presented at various ASB conferences at one time or another. We hope that you enjoy the rich tapestry that business scholars have come to know (and experience) over the past fifty years as the Atlantic Schools of Business.

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Article Introduction: One of earliest ASB papers dealing with the history of the association was written by Gabrielle Durepos and presented at the 2006 conference, hosted that year by Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. Gabie, at this point, was in her second year as a PhD student on the Sobey School of Business, PhD program and was grappling with the potential theoretical intersections between postmodernist historiography and actor-network theory. At the conference Gabie was awarded the Best Student Paper and went on in 2009 to develop a thesis on "ANTi-History" as a fusion of historiography and actor-network. In the ASB paper she set out to understand the human (e.g., business educators) and materiel (e.g., the production of conference programs) factors that came together to influence the character and continuance of the Atlantic Schools of Business.

FLEETING THOUGHTS ON ENDURING NETWORKS: CONCEPTUALIZING THE ATLANTIC SCHOOLS OF BUSINESS CONFERENCE[6]

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Abstract

This paper sets out to analyze the (enduring) character of the Atlantic Schools of Business through application of an Actor-Network Theory (ANT) approach. Drawing on selected developments that occurred since 2000, the paper attempts to disturb the "black-boxed" character of ASB and reveal it as a series of inscribed processes that constitute its continuance.

…Opening Thoughts

It seems as though few have been able to resist the all-encompassing and powerful nature of the modernist discourse in which social entities are assumed to operate independently of our mental cognition (Chia, 1996; Latour, 1997; Prasad, 2005, p. 215). And we as researchers, having been trained to 'see' or 'look' for the 'truth' have been able to discern it, and in mirror like ways, portray it accurately for engaged audiences (Chia, 1995; 1996; Latour, 1997). It has been said that this single great modern episteme "sets limits to the conditions of possibility" (Law, 2001, p. 6). Like water spiraling down a drain, it seems that many academics and non-academics alike, through conventional speech, text and the shared common sense of the social, have been or are being sucked into adopting and enabling this powerful modernist gaze to guide their everyday social perceptions and conceptualizations. In an effort to resist what seems to be an ever-present inclination of falling into and being trapped by an ill-equipped manner of explaining social phenomena, the modernist tendency of explaining the social without accounting for the a priori assumptions which make it up must be disturbed. This has proven to be quite a difficult task.

The omnipresent nature of the modernist discourse haunts us in all aspects of our lives. The concreteness and static-ness which we ascribe to what we refer to as entities, organizations, workplaces, conferences or even concerts are very much part of the way we order our social fabric. In our speech, discussions and conversations about our work, social activities and in many facets of our daily existence, we ascribe fixity to effects of social processes which enable us to draw on reductionist simplistic accounts of what otherwise would be chaos to order our existence (Chia, 1996; Law, 1994). What fuels this paper is the need to describe the process in which we have come to speak of, refer to and conceptualize of the Atlantic Schools of Business (henceforth ASB) conference held annually for the past 36 years as an ontologically 'real' entity (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) with assumed natural-like properties. How is it that in the order of things, in the patterning of the social, this annual academic conference has assumed ontological status, entity-like properties that enable us to speak of it as a unified monolith, to draw on the term 'ASB' when we wish to engage in discussion concerning its nature? How is it that when we speak of ASB, we do not describe the endless bits and pieces of the social, material and technical (Law, 1999) that make it up but instead use the words 'Atlantic Schools of Business' conference and are confident that these words have come to stand for, that is, represent endless relationships and networks of social engineering (Law, 1992)? Finally, as actors consciously aware of and speaking of 'ASB' we are involved in its dispersion but how can we be confident that through the use of these words we elicit a shared notion of 'ASB'? Are we aware that as actors engaging in speech about ASB we assume responsibility for its dispersion?

Instead of starting by "assuming what we wish to explain" (Law, 1992, p. 2); that is, instead of assuming ASB as an ontologically 'real' entity or organization which acts according to natural law-like tendencies, this paper begins with a "clean slate" (Law, 1992, p. 2). It is only in this manner which we can foster an understanding of orderings of the various bits and pieces of the social, the mechanics of power of organization which have in this case been so successful in becoming durable aligned actants, that they have subsequently erased themselves and their chaotic tendencies from view. Through the interaction of the various heterogeneous materials of the social and their subsequent alignment in forming what we call 'ASB', a complex mode of ordering (Law, 1994; 2001) has emerged which both enables and constrains the actions of the various actants

involved. It is this social pattern of orderings which has produced the effect we have come to refer to as ASB. It is the dispersion of this patterned network that constrains us in perceiving of ASB in any other way; thus, forming a "false necessity" (Unger, 2004) within our social orchestrations. This paper draws on Actor Network Theory (henceforth ANT) in putting forth an emergent and processual explanation of ASB as a patterned network of the social, made of heterogeneous bits and pieces which through their alignment have erased themselves from view, and thus created a "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (Whitehead, 1985 as quoted in Chia, 1996, p. 33). It is this erroneous belief; that which assumes and perceives of ASB as a static entity, which this paper wishes to deconstruct. Instead, ASB is described and conceptualized of as an effect of a pattern of social ordering (Law, 1994), as an emergent process which is in a state of constant flux that is, a state of becoming (Chia, 1996; 1995). It is proposed that ASB not be understood as a noun, not as an organization but instead as a verb that is as a mode of organizing (Law, 1994; 2001).

Simply put, this paper describes the process in which ASB as an academic conference has become "black boxed" (Latour, 1987; Akrich, 1992), that is, how it has come to act as a single point actor, thus "standing for" (Law, 1992) the endless complexity which it has come to represent. The paper begins with a brief overview of ANT while fully acknowledging that attempts at accurately "representing" or "mirroring" (Chia, 1996, p. 38) that which the theory entails is entirely futile (Law, 1999). Secondly, ASB is described in ANT parlance that is, as a mode of ordering in which the heterogeneous materials of the social are organized as to reproduce year after year, an effect which we name the 'ASB' conference. Of particular interest for this analysis, are the ways in which certain actors within the ASB network who span multiple networks can be understood as enrolling other actants into alignment thus rendering the ASB network more durable. Specifically, the ASB call for papers will be discussed as a "material delegation" (Law, 2001) capable of "acting at a distance" (Latour, 1988). And finally, because "Writing is work, ordering work. It is another part of the process of ordering. It grows out of a context. It is an effect of that context. But then it goes on to hide that context." (Law, 1994, p. 31), the paper proposes some final reflexive thoughts on the process of writing and researching. It will be proposed that this text also is an effect of a process, and that it too has the potential for assuming a concrete status, thus becoming 'black boxed'; that is, concealing its politicized process of creation from view (Latour, 1987). Lastly, the paper will propose that this new "inscription device" (Latour and Woolgar, 1979) has potential for contributing to the durability of the ASB network. But ultimately, the final conclusions of this paper are yours to make, as only you, the reader can assess the potential of this new inscription device; will I be successful in aligning your interests with that of this paper?

Notes on Actor-Network Theory

Crucial to any analysis using actor network theory is an understanding of the social as emergent and processual (Law, 1994; 2001), best conceptualized as a verb as opposed to a noun. As Chia (1995; 1996) notes, social ordering is best understood as in a constant state of becoming as opposed to one of being. As this paper takes an ANT approach to understanding the social constitution of ASB, this section of the paper briefly describes its relevant inherent methodological implications. Specifically, ANT is described as an approach focusing on relations between materially heterogeneous actants. It is articulated as symmetrical in its analysis

of the social while not only appreciating but celebrating the complexity and multiplicity of precarious modes of ordering.

The focus of ANT as an approach to the social is primarily on the diverse relations that constitute processes of ordering, in which various effects are produced (Law, 1997). ANT takes a symmetrical stance in that it is committed "to explaining competing viewpoints in the same terms" (Callon, 1986, p.196). As a result, modernist dualisms are collapsed and treated as effects given through the discursive nature of the social (Law and Mol 1995; Law, 1997). Actor-network theorists look relationally and transitionally, such that they are concerned with the strategic displacement, movement, translation, alignment, and enrollment of the parts making up the social; that is, how it is coordinated (Law, 1992; 1997; 2001; Callon, 1991; 1986). The emphasis is on understanding the constitution of durable and non-durable networks, their materials, the trials of the implicated actors, their negotiations, failures, political acts, and persuasions. Actor-network theorists tell stories of entities; that is, how entities take their form and attain specific traits as a result of "their relations with other entities" (Law, 1997, p. 2; Callon, 1997). Comparable to many mini discourses (Fox, 2000), the social is understood as shaping and shaped by the complex relations among the heterogeneous materials that make up networks (Collins and Yearley, 1992; Law, 1991; 1992; 1994; 1997; 2001). It looks at actors as products of diverse sets of forces, who engage in political acts to enlist other actors in furthering their cause (Callon, 1997). But networks or actors are never "tied up", that is they never reach that comparable to an 'end' state but are ever changing as they are effects of patterns which are translated in becoming part of other ongoing patterns (Law, 1991; 2001; Latour, 1992). In this sense, the most mundane and taken for granted aspects of the social are exposed as composed of complicated webs of relationships (Akrich, 1992). But I cannot 'represent' ANT truthfully or be faithful to its accurate translation as any sanitized, mirror like 'representation' which does not account for the effect of the writer on the written is bound for failure. Perhaps the only opportunity in which a researcher can represent ANT is by "**performing** it rather than **summarizing** it" (Law, 1999, p. 1; original emphasis). The next section of this paper will perform an exploration of the ASB conference as a precarious process while also as a durable network of the social.

Opening the Black Box of ASB

The ASB conference is an annual Atlantic Canadian conference. Drawing primarily small attendances made of a mixture of junior and senior researchers, the conference has miraculously maintained its annual reproduction for the past thirty-five years. The idea of the continuous survival of the conference is mostly taken for granted by those researchers who attend it. But once the black box (Latour, 1987) of ASB is opened, once we start exposing the complexity of the relationships making up the social ordering of ASB and following its network of associations, the mundane becomes exciting and our modernist tendencies of imposing order and simplicity on complexity are exposed (Chia, 1995; 1996; Law, 1994).

The first step in opening black boxes is a thorough disturbing of the comforting idea of ASB as a static entity. Instead, and as this section of the paper will show, it is proposed that ASB be thought of as a relational effect of the ordering of materially heterogeneous actors. Specifically, the section begins with a brief explanation of the effect of 'naming' and the process by which effects of the

social become black boxed. Although the ASB network has proven itself durable for the past 35 years, this paper will focus on the years 2000 – 2006 in outlining an important series of strategic translations in which the trials and successes of actors performing interest work, enrolling and translating other actors, have been instrumental in rendering durable the ASB network. In describing this complicated non-linear process of alignment, translation and enrollment, the relationships among technological as well as human actors will be mapped to determine how their precarious orderings have punctualised (Callon, 1991). Specifically, three material delegations which have come into being and have grown as powerful actors within the ASB network will be discussed to outline the heterogeneity of the ASB network. These heuristics are the newly developed ASB web site (http://asb.acadiau.ca/index.html), the call for papers published by the ASB 2006 hosting university: Mount Allison University (http://www.cira-acri.ca/docs/ ASBcallfor%20papers2006.doc) and the ASB proceedings. Finally, the paper will focus specifically on the call for papers to discuss the potential for this actor in "shifting action around itself" (Akrich & Latour, 1992, p. 259).

As previously mentioned, ASB has been assumed as a concrete entity, and through this assumption has been given ontological status (Chia, 1995: 1996). When we speak of ASB, we do not describe the process of alignment of its various actors; we do not describe how they have come to act in a unified manner but rather assume that through the order of things, they have. Naming is both enabling and/but deceiving. It enables us to draw on (in this case) an acronym to refer to a set of relational practices, thus allowing for the easy transportability of the term. In another sense, it is deceiving as complexities "are lost in the process of labeling" (Law, 1997, p. 6). We draw on the 'tidy' term 'ASB' assuming its coherence and neatness; a word which represents while simultaneously hiding its chaotic nature (Law, 1994; 2001). By disturbing this notion, we are able to recover the complexities that have until now been concealed from view.

The ASB network is an effect produced through the heterogeneous ordering of its aligned actors (Law, 1994). Ironically, what seems at first a simple network is a complicated precarious mode of ordering and organizing. It is composed of interacting actors and inscriptions who engage in political work to interest other actors in engaging in their cause (Law, 1992). Once a multitude of heterogeneous actors have come to act as one; that is, to engage in same causes, act in unison towards the same goals, share a program of action, they become known as "punctualised actors" (Callon, 1991). Since a multitude of actors engaged in a cause, come to act in unison and represent that cause, the network they represent can actually be understood as an actor or a "punctualised actor". The process of punctualisation converts an entire network into a single point or actor into another network (Callon, 1991, p. 153). It is in this sense that we can understand actors as networks and networks as actors (Callon 1997; Latour, 1997). But to understand this process of punctualisation or alignment of interests which is crucial in network formation, we must go back and forth continuously between the heterogeneous materials making up a particular chain of association of ASB because it is through this "incessant variation that we obtain access to the crucial relationships" (Akrich, 1992, p. 209; Law, 1997). As such, we must follow the trail or the chain of inscription to illuminate or describe the process by which the actors of ASB have become ordered (Akrich and Latour, 1992; Latour, 1987).

ASB is made of actors but if we dig deeper, we see that ASB is actually made of a series of punctualised actors or as we will come to understand: ASB is itself a network made of a series of

networks. ASB as a network has enrolled academics mostly from the Atlantic Provinces into attending and thus reproducing the conference for the past 35 years. Some of these enrolled actors more dedicated than others, have attended the conference almost yearly with their papers frequently appearing in the conference proceedings while other actors have not proven to be as successfully enrolled. It is this series of translations among actors, enrollments and counter-enrollments which make up and give ASB its distinctness as a network (Law and Mol, 1995). But these enrolled academics can also each be understood as networks, for they stand for an endless series of ideas, thoughts, and research agendas as well as all the relationships in which they engage daily and are shaped through. The academic is a relational effect of the heterogeneous bits and pieces of the material and the social (Law and Mol, 1995). The academic can be understood as standing for a network but since all of the actors making up this network are aligned into acting as one, the academic is a punctualised actor. Since actors are networks and network actors, it is important to recognize that actors in various stages of their existence simultaneously enact and contribute to differing memberships in multiple networks (Leigh Star, 1991, p. 30; Callon 1997; Latour, 1997; Law and Mol, 1995; Akrich, 1992).

The network of ASB undertook a series of crucial translations beginning in the year 2000, influenced primarily by actors enacting differing memberships in various networks. The year 2000 marked the beginning of Saint Mary's University's (henceforth SMU) PhD program in management, the only of its nature in the Atlantic Provinces of Canada. Some SMU faculty members, who were simultaneously enrolled in the ASB network, played a role in constructing the PhD program at SMU. Because the SMU faculty members who were enrolled in the ASB network saw ASB as a valuable venue for junior researchers, three of the six individuals making up the first cohort of the SMU PhD became interested in the notion of the ASB conference and its non-threatening atmosphere to present a first paper (ASB Proceedings, 2000). Their interest in ASB as a conference to present research was very much a "consequence of the relations in which" (Law, 1997, pp. 2-3) these students were located. Because the SMU students were themselves becoming indoctrinated into a "thought collective" (Fleck, 1935) whose principal actors were already enrolled into the ASB network, they too became successfully enrolled in attending the ASB conference. The various ASB enrolled faculty members at SMU continued to perform interest work on behalf of the ASB network, sharing their thoughts on the valuable nature of a small and local conference which could provide incoming PhD students a great venue to gain experience on presenting research.

As we have begun to see, understanding the network of ASB means to focus on actors, their relations and associations, which inscribe, impute and shape the make-up of all other actors involved; the way they translate others interests to that of their own (Callon, 1991; Latour; 1986). The ASB network in 2000 had successfully enrolled three actors (ASB Proceedings, 2000) due to the strategic work of ASB enrolled SMU faculty members who through engaging in political work had been successful in showing the value of a local conference for incoming PhD students (Callon, 1991). Through their enrollment into the ASB network, the SMU PhD actor's interests had been altered in a manner consistent with that of the ASB network, potentially making future translations easier. Ultimately, through the affiliation of the enrolled SMU faculty as well as the three enrolled SMU PhD actors a powerful connection was established. In 2001, the ASB network was successful in aligning another SMU PhD actor (ASB Proceedings, 2001) while in 2002 four SMU PhD actors were enrolled into the ASB network (ASB Proceedings, 2002). Interestingly, three of the four

SMU PhD actors enrolled in 2002 had begun their PhD earlier that year hinting to the previously mentioned notion of indoctrination into a "thought collective" (Fleck, 1935). As the PhD program continued to grow and enlist incoming students, these incoming students began simultaneously spanning the ASB network. In 2003, eight SMU PhD actors' interests were aligned and enrolled into the ASB network thus contributing to its annual reproduction (ASB Proceedings, 2003). In 2005, at least seven SMU PhD actors were successfully enrolled in rendering the durability of the ASB network (ASB Proceedings, 2005). This steady accumulation of translations of SMU PhD actors was extremely powerful in influencing future translations. Within the SMU PhD network, it became commonplace to speak of the ASB conference as a 'thing' or 'place where we catch up on what our colleagues are up to' thus reinforcing the notion of its unproblematic reproduction and entity-like status. The ASB network among SMU PhD actors as well as SMU faculty actors took on an air of permanence partially due to its perceived value which none wished to disturb. But while all of these actors contributed to the reproduction of the ASB network, some SMU PhD actors began to do so in a remarkably durable manner.

As has previously been mentioned, the ASB network is rendered durable when its various actors are able to punctualise; that is, act in alignment. But also contributing to the durability of a network is its ability in enlisting durable actors. Beginning in 2002, four SMU PhD actors took part in reviewing papers submitted for the conference (ASB Proceedings, 2002). Even more remarkable was the year 2005, where ASB's network enrolled four dedicated SMU PhD students as area chairs (ASB Proceedings, 2005). In the same year, two SMU PhD students enrolled in the ASB network took part in its executive council while at least another ASB enrolled actor who also part of the SMU PhD became active as a reviewer for the conference (ASB Proceedings, 2005). By contributing and participating in various processes that are crucial to the reproduction of the conference, these actors become vital to the reproduction of the ASB network.

Until this point, our analysis has focused on the enrollment of human actors into the ASB network and their contribution to its durability as well as yearly reproduction. But as has been previously articulated, ASB is a heterogeneous network of the social, made of actors of all kinds, social natural and technical who interact: ASB is an effect of this process (Law, 1999, p. 3; Latour, 1997; Law and Mol, 1995). What is fascinating about ASB and its durability is that until 2005 the network had little or no 'formal organization', that is little physical trace of ASB was left from year to year. Little or no material actors were enrolled in the ASB network in a durable manner such that the network had little trace of inscriptions, no written instructions for organizing the conference, formal e-mails describing the 'way the conference should occur' or the 'way resources should be allocated'. Rather ironically, as academics attending the conference, as actors' part of the ASB network, we unproblematically assumed its annual reproduction.

Upon inspection, only three inscribed material effects of ASB in which 'descriptions' of certain processes have been 'inscribed' in a durable manner come to mind (Akrich, 1992; Akrich & Latour, 1992; 1991). First, the conference proceedings which are published yearly after each meeting, second, the call for papers, put out by the hosting university and third, a newly formulated ASB website. These inscribed materials are effects produced through the network of ASB; they are actors which in part form the ASB network. But when we focus on these three material effects of ASB, we can also understand them as networks as they represent their specific lists of trials, competencies (Latour, 1991), efforts and political acts giving them their distinctness (Law and

Mol, 1995). The ASB website for example was formed by a group of enrolled ASB actors, of which at least two spanned the SMU PhD network. Through their commitment to the durability of the ASB network, these actors felt that such a site would "more formally bring together" its members (http://asb.acadiau.ca/index.html), that is allow for an easier process of "intéressement" and possibly enrollment into the ASB network (Callon and Law, 1982). Focusing specifically on the call for papers, the next paragraphs describe this inscription device as a "material delegation" (Law, 2001) capable of interest work and possible enrollment of academics.

The call for papers is an example of a particular mode of ordering which has been delegated to nonhuman materials, thus a "material delegation" (Law, 2001). Reflect on the role of the call for papers: it is a public notice distributed by the ASB hosting university facilitating the effective dispersion of crucial information in hopes of enrolling actors onto its network (http://www.cira-acri.ca/docs/ASBcallfor%20papers2006.doc). The call for papers is noteworthy in at least two respects. First, the call for papers has the capacity to act in a durable manner as it is inscribed. This inscription in turn renders durable the network of ASB, as effortlessly, it spans spatially reaching a wide readership (Latour, 1991; 1992). Second, it stands for, speaks on the behalf, and thus replaces the actors who have created and are responsible for its initial dispersion. It has become a punctualised actor, representing the aims of its aligned actors. It begins a process of "intéressement" (Callon, 1997) followed by a very political process of enrollment where other actors' interests (Callon and Law, 1982) will be bent and reshaped in alignment with that of the call for papers. In this sense, the call for papers does not "have power" but instead powerful relations are produced through its effective dispersion (Calas and Smircich, 1999, p. 663). It has the capacity to get other actors "whether they be human beings, institutions or natural entities – to comply with" it (Callon, 1986, p. 201). In this way, the call for papers can be understood as shifting "actions around itself" (Akrich & Latour, 1992, p. 259). This materially delegated inscription assumes power through its ability to "lock in" other actors in the conference's program and plan of action (Callon, 1986). The various academics who received the call for papers now have a choice: they can either be enrolled into the ASB network or refuse enrollment (Callon and Law, 1982; Callon, 1986). But it must be remembered that enrollment into the ASB network is done within the ASB networks strict guidelines, always on their terms. Thus, the power of the ASB network is maintained through its actor's relations and translations.

As has been illustrated, actors are made of a series of translations that "shape and determines subsequent translations" (Callon, 1991, p. 150). In this sense, actors can be understood as effects of those translations. But as networks are built and torn through a series of actors engaging in interest work, enrollment, alignment and translations (Law, 1992), two noteworthy points are in order: first, it is important to remember that the patchwork of the social is made both of cohesive and non-cohesive networks (Law and Mol, 1995), and second these networks can never be understood as 'last instances' but rather understood as emergent "circuits that tend to reproduce themselves" in variations (Law, 1991, p. 18; Law & Mol, 1995; Callon, 1991). But this re-production is precarious, dependent on a multitude of relationships becoming stabilized (Law & Mol, 1995). The thirty-five years of ASB's reproduction are achievements in which a network has been successful in interesting, enrolling, and translating interests. Its reproduction enables us to tell tales of alignment of interests, enrollment and translations of many actors, SMU PhD students, SMU faculty and other durable material delegations. Its apparent capacity to translate all its actors

to act in unison tempts us to assume its unproblematic reproduction. Finally, it provokes us to assume ASB as a unified monolith or concrete entity.

Closing Thoughts…

As previously noted, this paper cannot simply end with a conclusion of ASB as black boxed. This paper must instead close with some thoughts on the process in which an order was imposed on a multiplicity of events, data, and information about ASB to produce what appears now as a linear and ordered account. Some reflexive thoughts are needed to comment on how this account; that is, the explanations provided in this paper, have or will contribute to the black boxing of ASB. How will this story of ASB contribute to the durability and dispersion of the network? By stopping my account after the explanation of ASB as a black box, and not reflecting on the way in which this text, this explanation was socially constructed, the bits and pieces of the social which have rendered it possible would be hidden from view. Without reflexivity, a text taking into account its own production and the "researcher/theoretician's complicity in the constitution of their objects of study" (Calas & Smircich, 1999, p. 651; Latour, 1988; Kuhn, 1969), this text too would appear fictitiously as a black box.

This text is a product of a particular mode of ordering. The idea of crafting a history for ASB was fueled by the interests brewed in a particular PhD cohort's qualitative methods course. As many PhD students are continually enrolled into the ASB network, the idea of this assumed entity as having no formal history appealed to the facilitator of the course. An undergraduate was enrolled onto the project and began a process of gathering ASB proceedings and transcribing information about the conference into a database. Because the SMU faculty member who facilitated the qualitative methods course is a strongly enrolled ASB actor, he saw much value in engaging each of his students in crafting a text; that is, inscribing multiple versions of an ASB history in an attempt to begin unearthing its particularities. As it has been agreed upon that these texts be presented at the annual ASB meeting in September of 2006, this SMU faculty member was successful in translating the interests of those in the course and enrolling them once again into the ASB network. Finally, it should be noted that the actors which have been enrolled into the ASB network as part of researching its past are now engaged in contributing to its durability.

As such, this text is a network; it is a durable network which represents thoughts, ideas, inscriptions such as the call for papers, ordering, ASB proceedings, colleagues, advice, and qualitative methods of the social with pre-fabricated social categories (Law, 1994). The list goes on. The text is a relational effect of the strategic and instrumental alignment of the listed actors (Callon, 1991; Law & Mol, 1995). But these actors had to be drawn together in what Law calls a "centre of calculation" (Law, 2001, p. 8). Information was collected, gathered, assembled, and transcribed in one location where all that was relevant could be seen in order to calculate which bits would fit with other pieces. If we were to trace the network of this text, we would find a whole set of events and processes and other texts which were drawn together; that is, were translated into this text. This text has become a material delegation for telling the ASB story.

But as you read this text, those bits and pieces which have contributed to the creation of a linear story have concealed themselves from view. The order which I ascribe to the fleeting ideas and

thoughts which make it up appear static as they are "inscribed" (Latour & Woolgar, 1979) on the page. Their static appearance is fictitious as they have already changed since I have written them, having been read by you the reader, who with a head full of other competing thoughts will have interpreted them in a way not entirely consistent with mine. It is in this way that knowledge and words can only be understood as 'emergent' (Law, 1991). This imposed order has created a story which is one of many competing narratives about ASB. It is hoped that the reader will be 'interested' (Callon & Law, 1982) in this account of ASB, it is hoped that the reader will be enticed by my 'explanations' (Latour, 1988) and maybe 'enrolled' (Callon & Law, 1982) into the ASB network. This punctualised actor has potential for dispersion (Callon, 1997) though its reader. Will you be responsible for its dispersion?

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Article Introduction: The paper by Gabrielle Durepos was not the only one to focus on the history of ASB that year. One of Gabie's cohort members – Tony Yue – also presented a paper. In this case Tony's interest in a history of the ASB was sparked, not so much, by a history per se but rather a quest to tackle how such an organization could function for at least 35 years "without a standing organization or membership,' holding a conference in each of its ensuing 35 years until the present (2006). With that in mind, Tony set out to answer what this tells us in terms of organizational behaviour and the nature of organizations and how they produce and reproduce themselves. To that end, Tony drew on a research/narrative tool referred to as a "Mystory" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003) to make sense of the ASB's longevity. In the process Tony conducted several formal and informal interviews.

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CONCERNING THE STRANGE TALE OF THE MISSING [ORGANIZATION?] AND THE ATLANTIC SCHOOLS OF BUSINESS CONFERENCE

Abstract

This paper reports on the early results of a study which is part of the Atlantic Schools of Business Conference (ASB) Renewal project, which is attempting to producehistories of one of the longest running business education conferences in North America.Without a standing organization or membership, ASB has nevertheless held annual conferences for the past 35 years. How is this possible and what does this unusual situation tell us about the nature of (dis)(un)organization? I made use of a research/narrative tool referred to as a "Mystory" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003) in conjunction with early results from a series of formal and informal interviews which I conducted to probe actors' valuation of the ASB conference. This examination of values and my power relationship within the interviewing process allowed a nuanced exploration of consumption and valuation through the lens of signs and signifiers (Baudrillard, 1968; Kellner, 1989), evidenced in part through interviewees'perceptions of the conference itself.

In a time when the benefits of decentralized, lean organization are touted freely, this research offers a critical inquiry into what value individuals actually place upon an extreme case: that of a (dis)(un)organized organization. The potential disruption of the modernist discourse concerning the purported desirable, futuristic state of permeable and flexible organizations (with this 36-year-old historical example of such) is provocative and challenging. The fact that ASB is becoming more organized appears antithetical to

conceptions of this über "without boundaries" model. Lessons regarding the valuation of varying degrees of organization are applicable to both the theoretical and the practitioner realms of organizational studies.

Through this contribution regarding signs, power, and value, a richer understanding of the emphasis that actors place upon formal organization is explored.This preliminary report identifies early trends and challenges in seeking to understandASB and what it means to those who participate as well as those who do not become involved.

Introduction

The Atlantic Schools of Business (ASB) conference is one of the longest runningbusiness conferences in North America (Mills, 2005, p.39), and yet represents a tantalizing paradox. Strangely, this longevity has been accompanied by an equally persistent lack of standing committee, executive, or indeed even a clearly defined membership. This particular (peculiar) situation entered a new phase when, in 2004, theheretofore informal rotation of organization and hosting duties amongst the regional business schools "faltered" (Mills, 2005, p.39) and a persistent structure involving a standing committee and roles such as president was introduced.

One of the principal proponents of the now newly organized organization suggested that his graduate students, who were studying qualitative methods, might be interested in helping to construct a number of histories of the ASB conference. This effort to write about the conference would become a pivotal portion of the "ASB Renewal Project (Executive, 2006) with six presentations concerning histories of ASBtaking place in Sackville, New Brunswick during the 36th Annual ASB conference in 2006. This present work is a derivative of one of those presentations.

The problem of creating a conventional history of an organization which has not been organized in any conventional understanding of the word cannot be overstated. Myinitial work to uncover documentation concerning ASB was limited to finding a largely incomplete collection of past proceedings in which they themselves had little consistencyin terms of format and information contained within. At the same time, my efforts to search electronically for artifacts concerning the annual conference turned revealed two types of results: those resources concerning the recently launched renewal project, and the masses of citations of papers which were presented at ASB in the past.

Thus, we come to what is core of this paper. As I conducted informal queries regarding ASB, I came to recognize that there were a substantial number of different opinions as to the function, indeed the value of the annual conference itself. This combined with a lack of much by way of a conventional notion of textual evidence of theconference started my inquiries into the plurality of voices I heard, and led me to the conclusion that in some ways, I would be engaged in exploring historiography (that is, the creation of histories) rather than a documentation of an objective reality. It is difficult enough to find examples of those who have engaged in postmodern research (Prasad, 2005):page231, let alone this notion of the construction of a postmodern history.This particular project regarding ASB is difficult, fraught with potential contradictions and a corresponding lack of many guiding examples. Succinctly put in *The Houses of History*:

"Part of the problem for historians struggling to come to grips with poststructuralist practice, we suggest, is that there are few models and examples.Historians have critiqued and theorized poststructuralism for over twenty years but are only slowly writing from this stance." (Green & Troup, 1999, p.301).

This paper is therefore a postmodern inquiry into how ASB is valued by academics. In examining this case of the un(dis)organized Atlantic Schools of Business conference we have a certain unique opportunity in doing so. The juncture of the recent shift towards a more organized conference points towards nuanced change in how the conference and references to it are valued. Beyond solely my interest in understanding both the conference and a part of the culture of academia, there are likely broader implications in seeking to understand how actors value this conference without structure.In a time when the benefits of decentralized, lean organization are touted freely, this research offers a critical inquiry into what value individuals actually place upon an extreme case: that of a (dis)(un)organized organization. The potential disruption of the modernist discourse concerning the purported desirable, futuristic state of permeable andflexible organizations (given this 36 year old historical example of such) is provocative and challenging. The fact that ASB is becoming more organized appears antithetical to conceptions of this über "without boundaries" model. Lessons regarding the valuation ofvarying degrees of organization are applicable to both the theoretical and the practitioner realms of organizational studies

My Methods through this Madness

I am cautious in creating any history of ASB, in particular one that probes valuation of the conference and its referents. To this end I have made limited use of interviews, tempered with substantial reflexivity on my part. Initially, the interviews were conducted in a semi-formalized fashion with intent to use a "soft form" of groundedtheorizing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After the completion of a mere three structured interviews, I soon found that the notion of a self-contained process whereby I would report a generative theoretical rendition of the gathered information extremelyproblematic. This is for a variety of reasons which must be explicated.

As a doctoral student and fledgling academic, I am completely immersed withinthe very context which informs this study. I am also involved implicitly with the ASB conference. I have presented at the conference a number of times and in fact I am the current division chair for the Gender and Diversity stream of ASB. Depending upon ones' view, I am both extremely biased and unable to be objective, or in a position to well understand the topic.

Another complication which further illustrates the difficulty if not undesirability of any attempts on my part to appear unbiased relates to my mentorship under two particularly influential academic role models. Not only are these two individuals prolific in their research which originates from very different theoretical perspectives (one from the traditions of the "posts", the other from a strong quantitative tradition), they also havevery different views regarding the value and utility of attending the ASB conference itself. One of these individuals is supportive of the conference, and is working to organize it in a way to allow for its continuation. My other mentor sees the conference asa stepping stone for early presentation experience prior to moving on to more valuable publication outlets for ones work. I needn't search far for the plurality of voices speakingof ASB.

This plurality of voices became, for a time, my very own. As I conducted interviews, I recorded some of them using a digital recorder. These digital files were subsequently exported from the portable device to my personal computer. Initially this was with the intent to use a conventional transcription pedal to allow me to listen and peruse the audio file and thereby type the content I heard into word processor program.

As I make extensive use of voice recognition technology to write, I experimented with the concept of listening to the interview files using headphones and simultaneously (re)speaking what I heard using my own voice into a microphone. This would allow the well trained speech recognition program to convert the data into a transcripted textual form. I rapidly became disturbed by the process. It occurred to me that this represented an especially pure form of the appropriation and exercising of power that were already concerning me. I now had the technological capability to claim individuals' own words in my voice, a seeming fitting analogy of the grounded theorizing process. After exploring this technique with one interview, I ceased the process, destroyed the text file created in the process, and sat down for a long time to think about what I had done.

As a result, this research and paper take a different path than originally intended. I am simultaneously subject to the pressures to publish, desire to contribute and a wide range of opinions as to how the ASB conference does or does not play a role in these concerns. The problems are compounded in that I am part of a project to create historiesof the conference in question, and thus there is the very strong possibility that theorizingon my part may represent a persistent truth claim which then silences the very voices which I might seek to represent. It is with these factors in mind that I abandoned my pseudo-grounded theorizing project.

That is not to suggest that I have proceeded without any framework for making my inquiries into ASB. Given my interest in exploring and challenging the value-laden notions of both the ASB conference and my embeddings as a researcher within the power relationships of a social science inquiry, I decided to appropriate the notion of a "mystory":

> "A mystory is writing that juxtaposes personal narrative, popular culture, and scholarly discourses. Mystories are published in academic journals, yet they dethrone academic writing. They honor a journey of discovery, process of meaning construction, not only about the subject but about the self. They honor a journey of discovery, a process of meaning construction, not only about the subject but about the self" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p,189).

My mystory is constructed within a framework of understanding that examines objects, commodification and collecting. I have chosen to use elements of the work of Jean Baudrillard to make sense of ASB. I have also chosen to use some of the results ofmy interviewing of academics regarding ASB where I thought appropriate. The use of the mystory style of inscription also accounts for the extensive use of the first person writing style of this paper.

A System of Objects

In *The System of Objects*, (Baudrillard, 1968) describes a "…system of objects asa system of commodities which constitute a consumer society…" (Kellner, 1989:11). He then further argues that in our society, consumption is a focal point of life and that the systematic organization of the objects of consumption is hierarchically ordered (Kellner, 1989:13). This ordering is argued to be embedded in a "logic of social differentiation", hence there is an implied association with notions of prestige. Baudrillard further indicates that "Production and consumption are one and the same grand logical process ofreproduction of the expanded forces of production and of their control." (Baudrillard in Kellner, 1989:17). This notion of a political economy of the consumption, production, and ordering of objects is especially applicable to the situation of the academic and her/his publication record. As academics we are involved in the production and consumption of knowledge. We gain status through the signs of our production and consumption of knowledge as evidenced through our publication record. This collection of publications which we create is furthermore ordered within a social logic. This ordered collection as evidenced through citations demands further exploration.

Citations as Collections of Objects

One of the striking aspects of my initial contextualization of ASB was just how many individuals had presented at the past ASB conferences, and how this formed a large portion of the internet based results of my search for information regarding ASB (e.g. resumes, personal web pages listing accomplishments, etc) This same impression was confirmed in another presentation at the 2006 ASB Management Division special session on the ASB histories project (Shengelia & Mills, 2006). We might consider the listing of academics' publications and presentations as a collection of sorts. When Jean Baudrillard writes of collections in *The System of Objects* (1968) he characterizes collections and the objects contained within them in a variety of ways which mirror the results of my discussions about the value of ASB with other academics. He writes of objects in a collection as being:

> "…*abstracted from its function and thus brought into relationship with the subject.* In this context all owned objects partake of the same *abstractness*…Such objects together make up the system through which the subject strives to construct a world, a private totality." (Baudrillard, 1968, pp. 91-92)

He furthermore captures the seemingly competing notions of quality and quantity with regards to collection of objects when he writes of the object as passion and indicates that "Collecting is thus qualitative in its essence and quantitative in its practice." (Baudrillard, 1968) page94. Finally, in describing the notion of collecting, he describes destructured objects (Baudrillard, 2005:107-111) and links this notion to the concept of projection, not personalization. This, combined with a logic of examining objects and their collection as being imbued with passion and fraught with fetishisms, allows Baudrillard to conclude "… the possession of objects and the passion for them is, shall we say, a tempered mode of sexual perversion." (Baudrillard, 1968) page 107. We are now able to see a potentially contentious yet thought provoking view of how we academics construct our world and

world views around such citations, references and their collection.

Back to Mystory

In trying to navigate my sense of how I felt about the ASB conference, I foundmyself asking others how they valued the conference. The strange task of writing and presenting at an academic conference, which itself was to be the subject of the writing and presentation, was jarring. I wanted to simultaneously deconstruct how we valued

ASB and at the same time was accruing a citation for my collection based upon this work. I found myself being critical of the notion of this collecting and at the same time acting as a division or area interest chair at the conference. I was confronted with questions of how to value an organization that is (un)(dis)organized when that status seemed to have been both necessary for the entities survival and yet recently threatened its' survival. The exhaustive search for a coherent truth turned up empty.

This is not saying that I expended no effort to uncover such truth in my study. I asked one of my mentors about the conference and, paraphrasing their comments, they suggested that ASB was used by those with little research to "pad" their list of publications. I thought that this implied that there was some value in the citation, but that the value was in relation to the other hierarchal ordered publications of that researcher. The contradiction was made complete however when they noted, more to themselves than to me during this informal "interview", that one of the principle proponents of the conference was one of the department's most prolific researchers.

Convinced that I could uncover a more universalistic truth, I asked a number of interviewees about how and why they valued attending the ASB conference. As I madequeries about what they liked, didn't like, etc. I found myself frustrated and confused about the plurality of rationales given for attendance. I became virtually pedantic in myquestioning; seeking a truth that I felt already knew to be self evident. Thankfully I wasunable to find it. For example, two individuals reported that the notions of connecting with colleagues located in different schools and the fun of reuniting with others was pivotal to their positive experience at the conference. This did not confirm (nor did it disconfirm) my notions of value and ASB. The contradictions between my own conceptsof the value of ASB and those values espoused by a variety of perspectives started to accumulate. I began to wonder if the conference and the references to works presented atthe conference were actually anywhere near the same thing at all.

Of Signs and Simulations

Glenn Ward (2003: 66-71) outlines two propositions contained in Baudrillard's *The Evil Demon of Images* (1988): that "the reference principle of images must be doubted" and that "images precede the real to the extent that they invert the causal and logical order of the real and its reproduction". Between these two ideas we have a heuristic to describe

the strange intertextuality of my efforts to interview individuals about how they value an organization that doesn't exist, but nevertheless is referred to bythe citations of work presented whilst attending the ASB conference. My original effortswere essentially to document and then explicate how individuals value references to an organization which does not *per se* exist. Through engaging in a process of creating a history by utilizing a theoretical grounding that allows for the declaring of truth claims (my initial desire to use grounded theorizing…), my interview study would then become part of the simulation. The notions of what this type of organization would look like andthe very method of referring to it through the codified format of academic citations, are then inexorably tied to the fact that my history has become part of the conference and may be referred to through the following citation: (Yue, 2006).

The code that demands that academics collect and display citations becomes removed from what the conference itself seems to be. The objects in the collection ceaseto actually refer meaningfully to the human experience of attending, connecting with colleagues and friends, sharing experiences, etc. Instead they become hierarchically ordered and compared. Initially the quantity, then followed by a codified quality of citation becomes part of the milieux. The humanity of the reported interest in connecting with other academics from the region becomes subsumed in the fetishistic collection of the signs of having attended the conference.

Likewise, we see the reported ordering of ones collection of citations as being embedded within the very nature of simulation. The initial innocent concept of a representation becomes convoluted when, in our case, the citation as representation is referring to an (un)(dis)organized situation. Baudrillard describes this type of situation:

> "So it is with simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. Representation starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is Utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Conversely, simulation starts from the Utopia of this principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum." (Baudrillard, 1998, pp.166-184).

We are now able to offer a mechanism that explains why ASB is valued and collected as a citation (as evidenced for example in (Shengelia & Mills, 2006)) yet seems to also be subject to hierarchical ordering at the same time. It seems that this ordering is an attempt on the part of individuals to navigate the apparent simulation. We now also begin to see how the attempts to organize the (dis)(un)organized conference are part of this navigation process. As Ward succinctly states,

"We *manufacture the real* because of simulation. So once again we find that the real is not so much given as produced. Which basically means that we cannot win. This is why Baudrillard says that "images precede the real", and this is why the relationship between the real and its representation is now inverted.". (Ward, 2003, p.75).

Question the Answer, Don't Answer the Question!

What seemed a simple task, to produce histories of one of the longest running business school conferences in North America, has proven messy and confusing.In the absence of substantial artifacts with which to reconstruct such history, the concept of interviewing seemed a straight-forward panacea. This proved not to be the case. As I wrestled with the notions of power and authority in both creating a history, but also in theinterview process itself, I became uneasy and reticent to continue. In seeking objectivity,I became aware of how impossibly elusive finding it would be. I subsequently abandoned that project and began reinserting my experience, my bias, back into the picture. This work became my mystory.

When we take a very fluid social construction, such as the (un)(dis)organized ASB, and attempt to concretize it were are risking the obliteration of the essence of the phenomenon. In a strange way, the parade of citations referring to presentations at a conference that seems intangible (organizationally speaking) feels quite liberating. Are references to ASB examples of the "emancipation of the sign… from any archaic obligation it might have to designate something?" (Ward, 2003). Or, is the strange case of the missing organization, oft cited and referred to, actually best explicated by Baudrillard when he writes:

> "Nor can it be said that objects are an automatic substitute for the relationship that is lacking, that they serve to fill a void: on the contrary they describe this void, the locus of the relationship, pursuant to a process which is a way of not living the relationship while at the same time (save in cases of complete regression) exposing it to the possibility of its being lived." (Baudrillard, 1998, p.221).

Does the citation of a presentation at a conference that has no persistent organization or structure pose a simulacrum; a false, tawdry copy (Prasad, 2005) of the "real thing"? Or, per Baudrillard in the above quotation, does it point out both the absence of such a persistent relationship along with the simultaneous possibilities of the remembered connections of conferences past? And, if we are somehow taking the notion of an implied sense of an organization (based upon artifacts such as proceedings and citations) and subsequently attempting to build this organization into that which is presupposed within the socially constructed preconceived notions of what organizations look like, are we not then manufacturing the real? In short, are our efforts to organize ASB actually creating an ASB which is more real than reality can be? Will the new, improved and organized ASB then have become a business school conference hyperreality.

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Article Introduction:

The following paper, written by Salvador Barragan and Albert Mills, was presented at ASB in 2008. The 2008 conference was held at Memorial University in St. John's, NL. The paper relies on interviews of ASB participants to understand how these participants construct notions of the conference. Barragan and Mills note three categories of 'believers' in the ASB conference – true believers, pragmatic believers, and sceptical believers, who construct ASB as either legitimate and enjoyable, useful, or illegitimate, respectively. Thirteen years after the original presentation of this paper, it would be interesting to see how feelings have changed for the participants!

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NARRATING THE ASB CONFERENCE: HOW THE CONFERENCE IS SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED THROUGH THE TIME[1]

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[1] We acknowledge the valuable comments of the two anonymous reviewers

Abstract

One view for studying organizations is that they are socially constructed through language. We focus on how some members of the ASB conference constructed this organization, its legitimacy and themselves through their narratives.

Introduction & Theoretical Framework

The Atlantic School of Businesses (ASB) conference has been running since 1970 in Canada and it has been held at different universities across Atlantic Canada (Mills, 2005). The recently formed executive committee launched the ASB history project in order to create a memory of one of the oldest academic business conferences in Canada (ASB Renewal, 2008). As a result, several papers have been published in the proceedings of ASB and other conferences, and in some academic journals (e.g. Long, 2006; Long, Pyper and Rostis, 2008; McLaren, 2008; Murray, 2007; Pyper, 2007; Yue et al., 2007). Probably, these documents constitute the only textual evidence of the conference's history. We add to this project by analyzing how members of this organization construct both the ASB conference and themselves through the narratives they enact to make sense of their participation, the conference itself, and its legitimacy. We adopt an interpretive perspective to approach this study.

Social scientists have been studying organizations from a positivist perspective, adopting the view that the real world is out there and we have to discover it (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). However, other scholars have approached the study of organizations from an interpretivist tradition (Prasad, 2005), in which inter-subjective interpretations of the world become fixed and "eventually acquired a 'natural' existence" (p. 16). In this tradition, what is important is not to discover the 'real' organization, but how the organization is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and how its members make sense of it and of themselves (Weick, 1995; 2001).

Some of the previous studies on ASB have taken a social constructionist perspective. For instance, Campbell (2007) uses the Curriculum Vitae as textual evidence to construct the conference due to the lack of documented rules and procedures, which re-produce the organization (Putnam & Cooren, 2004). Long (2006) asked scholars from the Atlantic provinces who have or have not participated at ASB to construct mission statements of the conference. In doing so, these scholars construct ASB in a way that enhances the reputation of the conference and themselves. Murray (2007) focuses on interviewing young scholars who construct their own identities as academics by interacting in this conference with more established academics. McLaren (2008) identifies multiple discourses in relation to the awards at ASB using interviews. We contribute to this social constructionist and interpretivist scholarship by offering a narrative analysis of several interview-stories that our participants tell about ASB. These narratives construct, in different degrees, the legitimacy of the conference and the interviewed participants.

Social Construction of Organizations: Narrating the Organization

Social constructivists contend that reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and it is through language that individuals create their world (Rorty, 1989). From this tradition, scholars study

organizations through how organizational realities are constructed (Prasad, 2005) by organizational members who make sense of their experiences retrospectively (Weick 1995; 2001). Therefore, it is through language that social structures and identities are produced and reproduced (Fairclough, 1993). In other words, language is a means by which members construct the organizations in which they are involved. This construction does not occur in isolation. Collectives engage in the construction of what organizations are (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) by the process of 'legitimation' (p.86), in which explanation and justifications of reality are integrated and negotiated. For our purposes, people that have participated at ASB make sense of their participation, share and negotiate these meanings with other participants, and produce and re-produce a sense of legitimacy of this conference. Ultimately, they objectified reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). A member of the executive committee of ASB put it this way:

> *It is weird that the ASB people talk about it like it was a university or an institution or an organization. But it didn't have any hallmarks of an organization. The president was there by happenstance. These individuals [former presidents] were adopting those roles and were not hired. Individuals were volunteering. So it was all ad hoc. Well you can't have 30+ years of bringing [things] together for a purpose and go away without something else going on. So there's something else there. It's just like people wanting to get involved, people wanting an outlet, people wanting a forum to meet locally. I don't know who founded it. I don't think there was a founder. They just had a conference and it happened another 35 times. But there had to be something, we don't know. There are no records. Everyone knew what you were talking about and had a feeling about it one way or the other, they did or they didn't like it. So everybody was treating it like a thing that existed, but you couldn't point to it, you couldn't touch it (Interview 5 by Salvador Barragan; June 23, 2008).*

This excerpt shows how the narrator considers that some people treat the ASB as a 'thing' or 'something that is there', like real. Even people have a 'feeling about it' or an attitude towards it: they 'did or didn't like it'. However, 'you couldn't touch it', it is a reification of experiences and conversations that people have: 'everybody knew what you were talking about'. In this sense, organizations are 'networks of conversations' (Ford 1999, p. 485), meaning the ASB conference may be a network of several conversations or narratives among actors. Therefore, these narratives can be described as 'a form not only of representing but of constituting reality' (Bruner 1991, p.5) and in this case, constituting the ASB conference and its legitimacy. Narratives are especially important for the relevance of self-identity in modernity (Giddens, 1991). For example, identity is 'no longer viewed as given…, individuals must now construct who they are and how they want to be known, just as groups, organizations, and governments do' (Reissman 2008, p.7). Thus, it's through the enactment (Weick 1995) of these narratives that participants construct the ASB, its legitimacy and the identities of its members.

Organizations have been represented with different metaphors, of which machines and organisms are often the most common (Morgan, 2006). Czarniawska (1997) reminded us that another commonly used metaphor is the "Organization as super-person" or "Organization man" (p. 41). Organizations have been constructed as individuals, sharing some human characteristics such as personal identity. Therefore, organizational members may refer to an organization as if it has an identity. In this sense "it is useful to treat identity as a narrative…as a continuous process of narration where both the narrator and the audience are involved in formulating, editing,

applauding, and refusing various elements of the ever-produced narrative" (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 49). Narrative is defined as "the constitutive process by which human beings order their conceptions of self and of the world around them" (Worthington, 1996, p. 13) and it is "the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1). Therefore, what is important is not if the narration is a fair interpretation of reality, but rather its meaning (Gabriel, 2000).

There has been discrepancy about the differences between a narrative and a story. For Gabriel (2000), stories have "resonant plots and characters, involving narrative skills, entailing risk, and aiming to entertain, persuade, and win over" (p. 22); while for Boje (1991), "people told stories in bits and pieces, with excessive interruptions of story parts, with people talking over each other to share story fragments, and many aborted storytelling attempts" (pp.112–113). For our purposes, we will treat narrative and story as interchangeable as is done elsewhere (Hopkinson, 2003; Reissman, 2008). Weick (1995) tells us that storytelling is a process of making sense of experiences and events and for that "what is necessary…is a good story" (Weick, 1995, p. 61). In addition, Søderberg (2003) proposes five characteristics that a good narrative should have based on Bruner (1991): accounts of an event occurring over time, retrospective interpretations based on past experiences, focusing on human action, part of identity construction process, and co-authored by the audience. For our purposes, we anticipated that members of this conference would narrate their experiences retrospectively and would construct themselves, as well as the ASB, and these narrations would be co-authored by a specific audience: the researcher and the attendees to the ASB conference where this paper will be presented. In this sense, this "situated talk enacts broader social structures in the form of organizational and institutional identities" (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004, p. 160), including the legitimacy as an academic conference.

Traditionally, identity has been defined as something central, distinctive, and the enduring characteristics of an organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). However, this view has been contested (Brown, 2006). Similarly, Martin et al., (1983) study unique organizational culture in organizations and argue that the culture may not be unique. In fact, storytelling in organizations reveals differentiated and fragmented perspectives on organizational meanings and values (Martin, 1992). Similarly, official stories of organizations may not be unique, as presented in the 'official story' which can be told or can be expressed on the internet, in the press, and annual reports (Søderberg, 2003). However, there are different interpretations of it within the same organization. In this way, an organization may be defined as something that is always in the state of 'becoming' (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). As stated by Foucault (1986), individuals may resist control (e.g., impositions of identity) in everyday interactions such as enacting counter-narratives (Humphreys & Brown, 2002). The narrative approach allows adopting "a polyphonic understanding of the world" (Søderberg, 2003). For instance, David Boje's (1995) study of stories in Disney reveals that the traditional company's history of a happy family has been contested by other silenced stories of employees and Walt Disney's close collaborators. Therefore, we expect that the stories enacted by ASB members may be fragmented rather than one unique and shared story. Consequently, it is possible that the social construction of ASB and its legitimacy may be unique, differentiated, or fragmented (Martin, 1992). In other words, the narratives of the participants of this conference will form a collection of multi-voice stories that construct a polyphonic organization (Fairclough, 1992; Hazen 1993) due to the plurality of voices (Brown, 2006). These voices construct the conference in different ways by attributing to it more or less legitimacy, and in this way the participants construct themselves as more or less supportive of this organization.

Methodology

We use the narrative approach (Reissman, 2008), in order to enact stories about the ASB conference. These stories will be treated as the physical evidence of language due to the lack of written narratives about ASB. In addition, Patriotta (2003) suggests that narratives contain organizational memory and Reissman (2008) points out that interviews are helpful to "generate detailed accounts" (p. 23). In this way, we asked questions that invite participants to narrate freely their own view and the view of other scholars on ASB, their experiences in different roles they took, their experience in other academic conferences, their own explanations for the long history of ASB, and the future of this conference. The aim of these questions was to "open topics and allow respondents to construct answers in ways they find meaningful" (Reissman, 2008, p. 25). Our purpose was to intervene as little as possible during the interviews and to follow Gabriel's (2000) advice of becoming "a fellow-traveler on a narrative" (p. 32).

We follow the approach suggested by Reissman (2008): interviewing, transcribing, and co-producing. Similarly, Czarniawska (2002) notes that the interviews are a site for narrative production and the editing a site for co-production. Thus, we participate in the narrative production since "by listening and questioning in particular ways, we critically shape the stories participants choose to tell" (Reissman, 2008, p. 50). In other words, we first edited the interviews to form the narratives by eliminating the interviewer's questions, co-editing the answers in narrative form, cleaning the narrative (e.g. the phrase "you know what I mean" was eliminated, interviewer interruptions, etc), and setting the boundaries of each narrative as suggested by Reissman (1993, 2008). Each participant enacted more than one story or narrative and we categorized them based on the main theme(s). We also categorized the narratives based on the narrator's support to and involvement with the conference, according to the degree of legitimacy attributed by the narration, the encouragement to others to be involved, and the intention to participate in the future. In this tradition and under the narrative approach, it is difficult to provide validity and reliability recipes as those used in quantitative research. The validity of the stories told by participants and the story told by the researchers has to be replaced by "persuading the audiences about the trustworthiness" of the collected narratives and the interpretation (Reissman, 2008, p. 186). However, once we categorized each narrative by theme and by narrator's support, we did a second round of categorization of narratives to see whether they fit into those previous categories.

The interviewees were selected from a list that was initially originated from a broader research study focused on the history of ASB. For this paper, we analyzed 12 interviews that were conducted not only by one of the authors, but also by other researchers involved in the broader project. The profiles of the interviewees are shown on Appendix 1, where a summary of their academic position, their affiliation, the roles that they took at ASB, and the period of involvement. The majority were interviewed face-to-face at their own university, and some were interviewed by phone.

Discussion

The 12 interviews generated around 30 narratives. As noted elsewhere (Gabriel, 2000), some stories were richer than others in terms of better plots and not just presenting factual descriptions. We found close to 20

different themes and each narrative was assigned more than one theme, if necessary. When we checked again if the narratives fit into those categories, it was easier to see how a broader category or theme was better. Ultimately, we ended up with ten broader themes as shown on table 1.

Table 1: Themes of the Narratives

No.	Themes	No. of Narratives
1	Regional Conference	11
2	Friendly & Supportive	10
3	Legitimacy of the Conference	10
4	Hosting the Conference & Sense of Obligation	8
5	Comparison with Other Conferences	7
6	First Time at ASB	7
7	Formal Structure & Future	7
8	New Scholars/ Teaching Researchers	7
9	Networking & Sharing Experience	5
10	Working Ideas	4

The three more common themes were the *regional conference, the friendliness and supportiveness, and the legitimacy of the conference.* The *friendliness and supportiveness of the conference* theme has a shared meaning in almost every narrative that mentioned it, as one of the central characteristics of the ASB. On the other hand, *a regional conference* theme has a variety of meanings. Sometimes it was referred as something too local and small, and with less importance, and some other times, it was referred as something that promotes the second most mentioned theme: the *friendliness and supportiveness*. Similar to these contradictory meanings, the theme *legitimacy of the conference* represented different things for different narrators. For some, the legitimacy of the conference is justified by the good feedback, the subsequent publication in a journal, or the fact that some scholars presented papers also at other national or international conferences, and the peer review nature of the conference. At the same time, for some narrators the conference is not legitimate due to the fact that some established scholars, committees for promotion, and Deans do not recommend or recognize it. *Comparison with other conferences* was referred as being better than other national or international conferences in terms of feedback, collegiality, friendliness, supportiveness, involvement, interest of the audience, and less aggressive and competitive, on one hand. On the other, ASB was compared as not being as rigorous, legitimate, and recognized as the other conferences mentioned before. *The first time* at ASB usually was a nice, surprisingly good experience, with a friendly environment. This theme was presented also with the theme of good venue for *new scholars* or scholars that have teaching, but not much research experience, especially in the Atlantic region. It is also stated that the conference is legitimate for *new scholars*. *Networking and sharing experience* is also related to the theme

regional because it may help scholars share ideas for teaching and be in contact with researchers in their fields, due to the small size of some the Atlantic universities. *Hosting the conference & sense of obligation* has different connotations such as obligation, pressure to conform, duty, a need, an opportunity, or a contribution.

Our analysis also focused on categorizing the members by their narratives in terms of support to ASB and the legitimacy that they attributed to the organization. We categorized them as: the *true believers,* the *pragmatic believers*, and the *skeptical believer*s. Each of them constructed ASB in a different way as shown on the negative or positive connotations of the themes explained before. For instance, they differ on the degree of both the "affection" towards ASB and the belief of the legitimacy of ASB for career advancement in the academic profession, in comparison with other national or international conferences. We show only a few selected extracts of the narratives for space reasons.

True believers

In this narrative, the ASB event is constructed like a holiday, a time to catch up with friends who share an interest in research. There is a comparison with other conferences, in which the questions at ASB seem to be more challenging and the narrator constructs herself as someone that not only presents papers at ASB, but also at the Academy of Management (AoM) or the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada (ASAC). In doing so, she establishes the legitimacy of ASB. She shows affection and respect for this conference.

> *It's like Christmas*
>
> [Probably they think] I'm really crazy, but it's like Christmas for me. I really love the people that I've met on the PhD program, but I never get to see them anymore. ASB is like the time when I have a weekend to go crazy and catch up with everybody. Like 'what paper are you working on?' but at ASB we're not ... competing for each other's time. The session that I was in at ASAC was really good, but I've been on other sessions at the Academy of Management where the ... audience was not as involved in my paper. I presented my paper and I had one question, two questions and they weren't hard questions, like they were just like, scratching the surface of the paper. But at ASB, every paper I have presented at ASB, the questions that I have gotten were grueling. They were like really challenging (*Interview 8 by Salvador Barragan; June 26, 2008*).

Below, we have a narrator that retrospectively made sense of his experiences at this conference and what that has meant to him in terms of professional development: publishing in a top-tier journal and receiving nurturing support to develop working ideas. He attributes a human attitude to ASB, which is different than the attitude of ASAC. He establishes the legitimacy of the conference by his publication in a journal, the support he receives and at the same time he shows his continuing support by presenting papers there.

> *My first time*
>
> The first time I went to ASB was shortly after my MBA. I presented a paper, which actually was the very first paper I ever presented at a conference. And we won a "best paper award" and that paper eventually got published in a tier 1 journal and

... so my introduction to ASB was pretty positive. Ever since then, I presented one paper per conference. I used it as ... an opportunity just to think and talk about ... some ideas that I was working on, rather than to present finished research. ASB has the right kind of attitude, which is developmental ... a little bit more laid back and it's a little bit more ... 'let's hear what you have to say' rather than the kind of ... view that is ASAC, quite competitive and I, as I say, I don't, I don't enjoy that nature of the conference, it's not as nurturing (*Interview 6 by Salvador Barragan; June 26, 2008*).

The third narrator below compares ASB with ASAC and AoM. For him, the quality of the conferences is not different; the only thing that differs is the attitude that scholars have towards ASB and the numbers. He establishes the legitimacy of ASB by saying that those who present at ASB also present at other conferences as he has done. They have books and textbooks published. He also considers that the age of ASB and ASAC are comparable, so the quality should not be different.

Legitimacy

I've been to EGOS and ASAC and the Standing Conference on Organization Studies (SCOS) and a bunch of others, those conferences aren't any ... better than ASB. In the Academy of Management 7000 papers [are presented], so at ASB we're talking about 100 papers. ASB is a peer review conference, but there's this taken for granted assumption that it's small. There's ASAC and ASB in Canada. ASB is just as old as ASAC, probably older. People who present at ASB present at the Academy of Management and have written textbooks or books. So, there doesn't seem to be a significant difference between ASB and ASAC, other than the attitude that we have towards ASB. You have a generation of scholars who were pressured to publish in top tier journals. Then, when they grow up to be senior researchers bringing up other students and they tell them: 'You've got to publish in the Academy of Management. That's what they did for me, that's what I [do] for you.' The Academy of Management has only been around for 50 years, it started with 7 people. Well, ASB has been around for 35 years, which is close to 50. So, the Academy of Management starts in a country with 10 times the population of Canada, 10 times the scholarship. So there is no substantive reason for why ASB is not as [the same] quality as ASAC or [as] the Academy of Management, just smaller numbers *(Interview 5 by Salvador Barragan; June 23, 2008).*

Pragmatic believers

The narrator below supports the conference and has had a great experience there. However, she has not been for a few years. She encourages young scholars to go for learning purposes, but she doesn't attribute the same legitimacy as ASAC has. She constructs ASB as a friendly atmosphere and good for networking.

A great place to cut your teeth

I haven't been to ASB in a few years now...but as a new faculty member, I found it a great introduction into the conference world. So my memories of were that it was a great place to cut your teeth and try out some new ideas, but it was pretty low risk and fairly friendly in terms of the atmosphere...not, I wouldn't have categorized it as a high level conference. It is a regional conference, but a good place to learn. It's useful for younger faculty members and a good place to network, to see what jobs were available in the region. There was rigor there, but I wouldn't say that it was at the level of some of the American conferences and it's certainly not at ASAC level (*Interview 11, by Salvador Barragan; July 22, 2008*).

In the case below, we also have partial support for the conference by encouraging new researchers use it as a starting point. However, at some point they have to fly and go to national or international conferences. She is also pragmatic in the sense that going to ASB is less expensive for people in Atlantic Canada in terms of transportation.

It's time for you to move on

I encourage people to go especially for new faculty because it's less expensive than flying. Most of the time, you can drive wherever you are going, except (Memorial) we always have to fly. It's a good starting point. So...I never discourage someone [to go], but I have at some point to say 'it's time for you to move on, but it is time for you to go to something national or international'. Most people don't want to appear to be stupid ... or not knowledgeable in front of their peers so ... there is an increased pressure on them if you go to a national or international conference *(Interview 2, by Salvador Barragan; June 15, 2008).*

Skeptical believers

The next narrator compares the career of a researcher with the career of a hockey player by establishing the difference between attending a farm team (very low in the scale) and attending the NHL (the maximum place to play). In this sense, he uses the tiered system belief in academia to rate ASB in comparison with ASAC and AoM and attributes a lower legitimacy to ASB. He does not support ASB and is questioning himself the need for this conference for Atlantic Canada.

The farm team versus the National leagues

The conferences are ... on a tiered system and ASB is the bottom tier conference and the top tier is the Academy of Management, and ASAC, is the middle tier. People are looking for bigger conferences. It's like... you're trying to make the NHL, it's your goal to be a professional hockey player and you can't make it so you play in the farm leagues. If you don't have to play in the farm leagues, and you can get to the NHL, you're going to skip those farm leagues. And a lot of the PhD students are skipping the farm leagues. I'm not sure how much the other universities

in Atlantic Canada support it? How much do they really care? (*Interview 3, by Salvador Barragan; June 16, 2008*).

Similarly, the next narrator attributes a lower legitimacy to ASB by not presenting papers there, by saying that he will try to send papers to other national or international conferences, and by paying attention to what his Dean would say about ASB.

> *God forbid if you send it to ASB*

> *What I did is acted as a division chair...I'm not sure that I ever submitted papers to ASB...because usually if I had done 2 or 3 papers in a year, then I was sending maybe this one to Academy and this one to ASAC and this one to maybe EGOS and ASB would not be on the map...but it's hard to sort of denigrate the conference. And usually, the Dean basically said, 'You know, if you're going to got a paper, you're going to get it into Academy, I'll be much more impressed with that than if you send it to ASAC and, God forbid, if you send it to ASB' (Interview 10, by Salvador Barragan; July 22, 2008).*

Conclusions

Narrating the ASB conference through the lenses of different people provide us with multiple "windows into organizational life" (Gabriel, 2000, p .29). We found a polyphonic organization, constructed in different ways. It was like the 'Tamara-land' described by Boje (1995) in which people observed a variety of plays and endings under the same theater and the same play. For the case of the ASB, we should follow Czarniawska's (1997) advice that "organizational autobiographies" should not be treated as the "history of the company" but to treat them as "lives under construction" (p. 53). In this way, the social constructionist view that we took, helps us not only to discover the organization that is out there, but also to see how some participants of this conference in different periods of time, from different universities, and with different academic ranks, and roles at the conference constructed this institution (Berger& Luckmann, 1966), especially its legitimacy as an academic conference for the Atlantic region. These narrators also construct themselves as *true, pragmatic*, and *skeptical believers* in ASB and they ultimately contributed to the re-production of what this conference is in their eyes.

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Universities	No.
Saint Mary's	3
Mount Saint Vincent University	2
Acadia University	3
Memorial	2
University of New Brunswick	2
Total	12

Academic Positions	No.
PhD students	2
ABDs	1
Assistant Professors	3
Associate Professors	2
Full Professors	2
Ex-Deans	2
Total	12

Level of Participation at ASB				
Presenter	Chair/Div	Reviewer	Volunteer	No.
x	x	x	x	4
x	x	x		1
x				1
x			x	1
	x			2
x		x	x	2
x		x		1
Total				12

Period of Involvement	
70s – 80s	1
80s – 90s	2
90s – 20s	5
present	9
Total	17*

* More than 12 due to participation in more than 1 period

Article Introduction: In the following paper William C. "Bill" Murray focusses on how the annual ASB conference influences the career trajectory of junior faculty in the region and how this helps to shape the idea and legitimacy of the ASB in turn. Bill, then a part of the 2006 cohort of the Sobey PhD, developed his paper alongside contributions from Brad Long, Trish McLaren, Shelagh Campbell, Adam Rostis, and Rhonda Pyper on issues of crisis, legitimacy, resume references to ASB by former participants, and the role of Best Paper awards as a staple of conference prize giving.[1]

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Paper presented at the 36th ASB Conference, 2007

ENTERING THE PROFESSORATE: WHEN INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION MEETS INSTITUTIONAL HABITUATION

ABSTRACT

Doctoral students seek to discover their identity within academia through professional interactions. Involvement in professional conferences affords opportunities for interaction that are used in the process of socially negotiating the construction of reality and as the cornerstone of identity creation. Based on Weick's belief in understanding through storytelling, this study will examine the experiences of junior researchers at the Atlantic Schools of Business, exploring their process of identity creation when interacting with academic professionals who are embedded within the habituated practices of the institutionalized professorate.

Those who choose to work within the field of academics progress through a series of learning checkpoints. Graduate school, research, conference presentation, teaching, and publication are all markers along this professional development. These cues highlight the transitional process to both the specific actor and their socially negotiated environment. Cues exist not only to help build skills and abilities of one who has become an "academic", but also signal a change in professional identity to others. If this sounds like joining a member-only club, the parallel is very accurate. Becoming an academic is to join an elite organization, and those who already

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[1] Campbell, S. M. R. (2007). If a Tree Falls in the Forest. . . Reproducing Organization Through Text -- A hermeneutic Analysis of Curricula Vitae and the Atlantic Schools of Business conference. *Proceedings of 2007 Atlantic Schools of Business conference, Acadia University, September 28-30*, 33-43; Long, B., Pyper, R., & Rostis, A. (2008). Constructing a Legitimate History: Crisis, Legitimacy, and the Atlantic Schools of Business Conferences. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences, 25*(4), 295-306; McLaren, P. G., & Mills, A. J. (2008). "I'd Like to Thank the Academy": An Analysis of the Awards Discourse at the Atlantic Schools of Business Conference. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences, 25*(4), 307-316.

possess membership control entrance. Thus, it becomes a mélange of objective measures, including scholarship and publishing, as well as a significant subjective evaluation in which potential candidates are judged on personal fit by members already in place. Those within academia assess candidates on their adoption of particular actions, artefacts and language usage (Beech, 2006), reinforcing the constructed reality of their everyday world as one negotiated between individuals (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The life of the professorate thus is a socially structured institution created through the intersubjectivity of academic professionals (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Through the experiences encountered during the doctoral process, students make adjustments to behaviours and learn to function within the realm of academia (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001).

This paper focuses on the reflexive experiences of junior academics in their construction of a professional identity. Drawing on their experiences at the Atlantic Schools of Business (ASB) conference, experiences that are representative of similarly reproduced professional interactions at other academic conferences, junior academics work within the conferences' institutional framework and the interactions with other actors to help make sense of their new negotiated reality. With a 36-year history, the ASB conference is one of Canada's longest running business conferences, uniquely maintaining a multi- disciplinary business school focus in the Atlantic region (Mills, 2005). The ASB conference has replicated itself throughout the majority of its history without the traditional infrastructures that drive similar academic gatherings. The majority of its reproduction stems from accepted habits of the informal institution. Lacking the trapping of a formal structure for the majority of its existence, one can surmise that this conference maintains a value within the community of practitioners in the Atlantic Canadian region of post secondary educators. For the individuals participating, these routines embody the valued characteristics of the collective and become activities that formulate its history (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

"I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS JUST REGULAR PEOPLE THAT SHARED IDEAS"

Shared cultural phenomena, as maintained in the epistemological perspective of interpretivism, are external displays of experiences based on internal understandings (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) that have subjective meanings attached to them within a specific social context (Weber, 1947). Berger and Luckmann clearly state that because institutions are socially constructed and exist as an external reality, the individual cannot gain understanding through outside observation alone (Berger & Luckmann, 1966); they must move within the institutional structures to truly learn them. Weick refers to this process of interaction as the constituting element of identity creation (1995). Individuals working towards acceptance int the world of the professorate, those who are completing their graduate studies and working toward tenure, seek to make the transition into this different reality, or new community of discourse (Blenkinsopp & Stalker, 2004). This transition begins early in the doctoral studies (Reybold, 2003), as the inner workings and novel responsibilities of the professorate are discovered. Beech stated that even the act of becoming a student constituted a shift in personal identity (2006), beginning the process of transformation. Moving through the unique system of graduate studies into the realm of academia represents a fundamental shift of interactions. Changes with the people involved in the interactions, as well as the corresponding discourse, create a shift in how a person constitutes their identity (Weick, 1995). Acknowledging this transformative journey, junior academics seek to both learn and demonstrate the appropriate cues of the professorate. This progression understandably alters the identity of those involved and how students begin to define themselves as professionals. Due to the large influence of intersubjectivity involved in both a socially constructed reality and identity development, definitions of self become negotiated artefacts within the larger social construct of academia.

In his study of academic culture, Reybold found (2003) that it is the cultural construct that provides the definition of expected professional realities for all individuals embedded within that particular culture. These defined realities provides various lenses which present members of that community with the means to understand and place value on the events of the world around them (Bergquist, 1992). Identities, or one's sense of self, are considered by many as fluid and changeable, with new identities forming with the progression of our lives and experiences (Blenkinsopp & Stalker, 2004; Reybold, 2003). As individuals make the choices of both professional direction and the lenses of interpretation through which that profession assigns value, they also shape their identities within that social context (Blenkinsopp & Stalker, 2004; Giddens,1991). Leavitt (1991) acknowledges the familial conditioning that occurs with doctoral students as they are brought into the folds of the professorate, normally under the parental figure of an academic mentor. This immersion into the academic culture helps to prepare students to assume the roles of conduct of institutionalized environments (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and become aware of the appropriate scripts for behaviour in the professorate (Reybold, 2003). Within these scripts,students become introduced to and are influenced by areas of knowledge and ways of being, both at the cognitive and affective levels (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) that are appropriate to their changing roles.

The participation in academic conferences provides an opportunity for the behaviours of senior academics to be observed, as well as an environment in which junior academics can begin to practice their roles, actualizing it upon the presentation stage (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and observing the consequences of those presentations (Weick, 1995). Actions and interactions provide a frame of reference for less experienced participants, allowing them to make greater sense of appropriate displays within this constructed environment. A large component of work completed by academics takes place in relative isolation, yet from the interpretivist perspective, identity can only occur through the negotiation among participating actors within a social network. In the case of the educational community, greater influence in this ongoing negotiation is privileged to those already rooted within the environment. This privileged voice of embedded actors produces actions of habituation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), typifying the actions into a form of institutionalization. These habits of action help to guide the entrance of newer actors through a socialization process not only of technical knowledge but also the exposure of "appropriate attitudes and self-conceptions" (Weiss, 1981), preparing them for academic role enactment.

For the junior academic, the challenging progression through graduate studies includes understanding and adopting the professional characteristics that exist within academia. These attributes of academia help the doctoral student negotiate meaning within the educational environment and add to their comprehension of the epistemology of the professorate (Reybold, 2003). As such, participation in social functions with other academics provides the opportunity for meaning negotiation; this type of association with peers and colleagues therefore serves a valuable role in professional development(Merton, Reader, & Kendall, 1957). Yet the construct of academia has existed for centuries, possesses a history predating any one academic and lasting well beyond their years. As such, the duration of academic existence and it's history often allows this negotiated social construct to be experienced as an objective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Through involvement with institutional activities, such as conference participation, existing patterns of predefined behaviour can serve to guide and focus junior academic development and limit the multitude of available alternatives (Berger & Luckmann,1966). By observing the actions and behaviours of those embedded within the specific community, junior academics begin to understand their roles and expectations in the academic labour process. These incorporate the production of academic artefacts, including conference participation and publications (Blenkinsopp & Stalker, 2004), all of which impact their developing professional identities as faculty (Reybold, 2003). Paradoxically, the observation of established behaviours andmimetic reproduction in the process of identity construction can both enable and constrain future directions and choices ofjunior academics (Blenkinsopp & Stalker, 2004; Giddens, 1991).

For this study, a series of five interviews was conducted over a two week period with PhD candidates pursuing their degree at an Atlantic Canadian university. All candidates have presented original research at the Atlantic Schools of Business conference within the past two years; their reflexive experiences were collected in an effort to reveal stories of professional identity construction as influenced by conference participation. Names were selected from published documents of past ASB proceedings. Interviews were conducted at the school of each participant; names of all participants have been altered for anonymity. Each individual contributed their personal experiences or "stories" as they remembered them; this reflection is both a common method used to share ideas (Feldman *et al.*, 2004) and is a critical aspect of meaning-making within a phenomenological perspective (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The process of sharing stories also serves as a method to clarify and recompose particular understandings of past interactions (Feldman *et al.*, 2004). As the events of the past were loosely reconstructed with the inclusion of experiences and action, they formed into a cohesive collection containing both plot and direction creating a personal narrative of past experiences (Franzosi, 1998) for each participant.

The interview, as a qualitative method, was chosen to probe in greater depth the experiences of junior researchers in academic conferences. According to McCracken, the interview method "can take us into the mental world of the individual"(1988). By questioning each participant on past experiences, an opportunity was provided to uncover intricate details that are extremely difficult to expose with quantitative methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Trocchia & Berkowitz, 1999). As these doctoral candidates look back upon past actions, they work through an understanding of past experiences by reflexively analyzing key elements in the sensemaking process (Weick, 1995). With interviewing, the value of exploring past activities with a broad scope provides greater value than mining any one particular experience (McCracken, 1988).

"I WAS CONSTANTLY CONFUSED AND TERRIFIED"

During the interview process, the conceptualization of the academic identity was probed in an effort to situate experiences within a time frame, creating a temporal flow from 'then' until a closer 'now'. This created the framework for sequencing the narrative format (Franzosi, 1998). Graduate students have been involved in the university system for many years up to the point of entering a PhD program; associating with professors is a common experience. Yet, if indeed a true understanding of both the construction of reality and the corresponding institutions is developed through negotiation among participants, junior academics may not have a clear vision of academia prior to entrance. Not only has exposure to the academic world been limited in scope in the years before doctoral studies, entrants into the academic world have not been embedded within the construct of the academic. This absence of embedded involvement becomes a barrier to meaning- making (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Reybold, 2003).

> "Well, I guess I would characterize it as two, two main areas…one would be teaching. I thought of academia as being about teaching, first and foremost… That was what I understood it was to be an academic and why I would pursue a PhD I guess. The other aspect I was aware of was this research notion, but quite frankly at the time…just prior to going to ASB and then around that time, my concept of what research was is pretty narrow." – (Jacob, PhD Candidate)

The concept that academics actually produce knowledge was missing in the initial understanding of professional identity. Those entering this new world saw the transmission of information and skills training as holding the seminal position of the professorate. The role of the researcher within the academic construct lacked a level of tangibility up to this point.

"I defined the role much more as a teacher, as an educator, than I did necessarily as a researcher. And I don't think

at the early stage … at the beginning of my career…that I appreciated the role of the research component and the construction and recreation of knowledge, and all that kind of stuff. I just thought of myself as sort of an educator, a conduit of someone else's knowledge to students" – (Cynthia, PhD Candidate)

The metaphor of the conduit removed the pressures of knowledge creation as a variable in the forward movement into a new identity, minimizing the number of unknown characteristics of expected behaviours to be adopted. When reflecting back to their entrance into graduate studies and the activities involved in that endeavor, it seemed to be easier to compartmentalize the identity characteristics of the senior academic as 'teacher' or 'conduit'. Preconceptions of the world of the professorate were described and then quickly challenged as surprising discoveries were made. These surprising discoveries forced doctoral students into the negotiation process with their new realities.

"I think I thought it was much more pontificating and people selling of ideas. I thought this guru would standup there and everybody would bow down to them and think, "Oh, the god of…some new invention or some new wonderful theory." I didn't realize it was just regular people that shared ideas." – (Tom, PhD Candidate)

"HOW DID I FEEL THAT I FIT? UMM…I DIDN'T FIT"

The unexpected discovery of professional characteristics and roles created tensions as the realization of entry into something unknown had begun. Movement into the doctoral world requires socialization into a set of practices and perspectives already entrenched by existing members (Reybold, 2003). Through the involvement in conference activity, the junior academics are invited to participate in the creation of their new professional identities. Yet the beginning of this process does not come without certain trepidations.

"The first one, I don't even know that I really remember a lot about it, I just didn't understand. I was constantly confused and terrified, and I wasn't even certain I was going to become an academic." - (Jacob, PhD Candidate)

"That's developed over time. First one real scared; second one, I felt a little better. I think I look forward to going to the next one even more." – (Tom, PhD Candidate)

Others saw this period as a true moment of discovery, seeing for the first time the depths of a professional world they had been surrounded by for years, yet not actually ever seeing in full detail. Entrance into the doctoral environment and participation in the events of that process revealed greater detail and depth in academic activities, and provided access to a world held in privilege.

"How did I feel that I fit? Umm. I didn't fit. I didn't really see myself as part of that world. I wasn't part of it… I just saw a completely different world, the world that I, to me until that time, had been submersed, hidden almost you know. " – (Brian, PhD Candidate)

Once gaining access to the academic world, a metaphorical seat at the table in the negotiated reality of this construct, identifying markers were sought by doctoral students to facilitate their understanding of new 'reality'. How does an academic professional behave? What are the tangible pieces of legitimate evidence in their trade? The novelty of this environment was different than past industry experiences, yet the progression of socialization in the eyes of the junior academics appeared to follow a familiar course of action.

"I had to certainly relearn new ropes and understand new processes and meet new people and recognize that there are…very unique networks and histories and all that kind of stuff that I needed to become personally more aware of. I think that's an ongoing process. I still…it's a…learning a bit more about academic life certainly and the politics of it, the bureaucracies of it, the sort of 'rights of passage' and all of that are still somewhat, you know…I'm learning as I go." – (Cynthia, PhD Candidate)

Identifying the rights of passage established a linear progression in understanding and involvement, moving from the point of confusion at first entry into the replication of traditional actions and habits, ending in acceptance within a community of professionals. The interaction at the ASB revealed particular ways that actors display themselves after working through the intersubjectivity of peer interaction.

"I think it's common practice…when you're put into a group of people who have common experiences and a common interest and they work together and they share, they collaborate, they talk…they develop their own jargon, they develop their own jokes maybe. I really think that that community, through time, develops a sense of being…which contributes to this whole notion of a belonging to that particular community…in the sense that whether you accept that way of being or that group." – (Brian, PhD Candidate)

Merton (1957) stresses the interaction among peers at the graduate level as one of the most critical factors in committing to the academic world. The ASB has provided junior academics with the opportunity to share experiences. During these exchanges, distinctions became apparent between subgroups and an intra-cultural constructed hierarchy was revealed. Junior academics, based on low positional power and a need to display credible actions (Beech, 2006), created distinctions with those embedded in the academic environment.

"When you're working towards your PhD, and there's other people who have what you so greatly desire to possess, if you wish, calling them peers is somewhat problematic. They have something you don't have."
- (Jacob, PhD Candidate)

"IF YOU LOOK LIKE A DUCK…"

For some junior academics during their identity construction, the balance of competing roles between peers and established academics created a conscious divide between socially-defined status levels within the academic network. Established members of academia play a large role in the subjective evaluation of doctoral students as they move to join the professorate. However, peer relationships compose the professional support network for doctoral students; they assist the students when navigating the cognitive and affective issues of graduate school. As such, negotiation of identity may also embody an intentionality within specific interactions, based on the social level of the participants in each specific social exchange.

"Your peers, it's really cool. You really talk about what's going on, what's going down. You ask, "What does that big word you just used mean?" and you can talk and you can understand, and you get to understand what they're really talking about. Whereas, people who are well published, or better published than I'll ever be, there's a lot of reverence. There's still a lot of stroking, ego stroking. You know, kind of, potential for joint papers some day or…it's politicking. It's politicking." – (Tom, PhD Candidate)

Recognizing multiple role levels and patterns of behaviour reaffirmed the acknowledgement of existing bureaucratic structures within the conference history and it's institutionalized products (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Although the interaction with conference participants was hailed in all interviews as supportive and safe, the awareness of role levels was tangible. Those at higher status levels provided training in methodology to doctoral students; these new researcher skills were used on occasion to specifically examine the question of professional identity. At times the behaviours and interaction at the ASB conferences themselves became the focal point of research, facilitating intentional understanding of the academic community through participation and selected isomorphic replication.

"I took it as an ethnography. I specifically sat down and said "If I am to understand what academics do, I need to try and become a participant observer in the academic life." Thus, I went to ASB; I determined that I should present there…also determined that I should get involved in the…professional services aspect of things…So, I went with the express concept that I would begin to learn what it was to be an academic by using, at least partially, this ASB experience to, sort of, observe what academics did and then try to mimic it in such a way as I could learn what it was to be a real PhD student-type." - (Jacob, PhD Candidate)

By actively implementing this style of engagement, the involvement in the conference events and creation of key artefacts, including conference presentations and research papers, junior researchers began to create a history and structure suitable to facilitate the sense-making process (Weick, 1995). Participation within the structure of the ASB conference assisted construction of professional identity (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and a greater understanding of faculty responsibilities (Merton et al., 1957). However, hesitation in commitment to a particular course of involvement may remove the junior academic from an entrenched position, exposing the hegemonic tendencies of institutional habituation.

"I have a belief that has been strengthened by the ASB experience that he who allows, or she, who allows themselves to be cloned in the usual ways will get farther. This is the way we've always done it; this is the way it's supposed to be done. If you look like a duck and walk like a duck, we're going to call you a duck, and give you a job as being a duck. So I know that, and I've seen it. And if you act too much like a swan, or an ugly duck, well, you're not going to get anywhere; you're not going make any changes." – (Tom, PhD Candidate)

Thus, participation in conferences such as the ASB provides many differing cues for understanding a multi-layered profession. Not surprisingly, the cues found upon reflection often contradict each other, or are open to paradoxical interpretations. The mimetic reproduction of artefacts and practices was mentioned by those questioned as a vital tool in understanding academic life, yet at what point does this replication transition from an educational tool of meaning to a loss of individual voice and style? I cannot claim to have discovered an answer to this issue during my investigation of the identity process, knowing only that it remains a process of discovery. Within the Atlantic Canadian academic community, exploration is embraced through events including the ASB conference.

"Everyone seems to be genuinely interested in who you are…you know we're all members of business schools, so what area do you instruct in, what are some of your research interests and areas. There seems to be a genuine sense, regardless of seniority, of community building within the Atlantic Provinces." – (Cynthia, PhD Candidate)

Involvement within a community of practitioners can provide cohesion during the moments when junior academics feel a disjointed sense of identity and belonging. Institutional support, in the form of encouraging conference participation at the ASB, creates an environment of safety where the symbolic productions of the professorate are both attempted and evaluated.

"It's the place where I got to do a lot of stuff without fear and rejection, and not being 'rigorous enough' and those things, so it's been as important to me in terms of my development as an academic as the Academy or ASAC, or a couple of other places." – (Genevieve, PhD Candidate)

"As doctoral students…it contributes towards the legitimation of us as members of an academic community...it's a good place to go to get experience, to get a little bit of practice, to get some comfort with that type of presentation and defense of an idea or a paper…the utility from an academic perspective is probably the greatest for doctoral students" – (Cynthia, PhD Candidate)

"THIS WILL BECOME MY WORLD"

Ultimately, doctorate students and junior academics negotiate a unique professional identity in this new frontier. Reflections on first-time participation in academic gatherings brought to the forefront feelings of novelty and confusion. Basic questions of action, speech and dress from past conferences highlighted the quest for understanding, or personal fit as a professional, within the academic community. Roles and responsibilities, including "becoming" a researcher, signaled a change in how junior academics recreated themselves in both their own eyes and in the view of peers. Learning the politics of academia revealed pressures towards behavioural adjustments, stemming from intersubjective identity negotiation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), into what was uniquely described by one subject as "duck-like behaviours".

Through conferences such as the ASB, junior academics will find opportunities to rehearse the scripts of their profession in a relatively safe environment under the guidance of those in positions of mentorship. With experiences to reflect upon and stories to tell, reflexive data is now available to satisfy Weick's sensemaking process (1995) and help create their identity within the professorate.

"That was the first time I felt like I belonged to the community, and to be honest, I really think that going to a conference, to ASB specifically, made me feel like, you know, I'm participating in this world. This is become…this will become my world." – (Brian, PhD Candidate)

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Article Introduction: In this last paper we return to something approximating a "history" of the ASB as Arlene Haddon and I set out to capture some of the narratives that come together to form that history. Arlene joined the PhD program in 2007 along with Salvador Barragan whose paper we highlighted earlier. Sadly, Arlene died of cancer in early 2013, shortly after successfully defending her PhD thesis – *"Leading on the Edge: The Nature of Paramedic Leadership at the Front Line of Care".* We dedicate this history to Dr. Haddon.

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RECAPTURING THE LOST HISTORY OF THE ATLANTIC SCHOOLS OF BUSINESS (ASB): STORIES FROM THE EARLY YEARS[1]

ABSTRACT

Knowledge is a source of wealth that is constructed and reconstructed through stories. This study attempts to capture the story of the Atlantic Schools of Business (ASB) through the voices of the people who were involved during the early years.

The ASB History Project

The Atlantic Schools of Business (ASB) is one of the longest-running organizations of its type in North America. Consisting of the schools of business from the four Atlantic Provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland-Labrador) the schools collaborate on matters of mutual concern. Each autumn, a regional conference is hosted by one of the schools on a rotating basis. There is no formal record of the ASB's early years, and no stories documented to preserve its rich history.

Stories about the past tell the history of an organization and bind people together in ways that may determine future action and promote cultural norms (Brown, Denning, Groh & Prusak, 2005). Storytelling enables people to gather accumulated wisdom (Patriotti, 2004). With the passage of time and the inevitable aging of the original members, the early stories of the ASB willeventually be lost unless they are preserved. The stories reveal the cultural and historical context from which the ASB grew and flourished.

Recognizing that participants are retrospectively reconstructing the history of the ASB, its likely that the passage of years has sharpened some memories and dulled, distorted or lost others. On the topic of retrospect, Weick (1995) argues that people only know what they know after they have

lived it. Time is used as a methodological lens to allow the past to be reconstructed (Patriotti, 2004). In the ASB History Project, the past is reconstructed by tracing the ASB back to when it was first conceived or when the storytellers first became aware of its existence, perhaps highlighting the event or trouble that resulted in a need for this type of collaboration amongst the schools.

BACKGROUND

A review of the literature reveals that stories serve as a sensemaking device in organizations and are used for social cohesion and to articulate a shared identity and purpose (Hermans, 2003; Brown et al, 2005). Czarniawska (1998) claims that, "the greater part of organizational learning happens through the circulation of stories" (p. 8). What is known is often taken for granted and remains in the silent background of learned experiences within an individual (Patriotti, 2004). Organizational knowledge can be lost when people leave, taking their stories with them (Delong, 2004). Retrospective sensemaking involves creating meaning by attending to something that has occurred in the past, is influenced by what is happening in the present, is created from a memory, and is affected by the situational context that caused the response in the first place (Weick, 1995). In this instance, we are interested in what caused the formation of the ASB in the first place.

Gathering the stories of those who lived the experience of the formation of the ASB is essential for reconstructing and preserving the rich history, enabling the voices from the past to share their lived experience with present and future generations of the ASB. The concern is not so much with gathering facts, as it is with the story as it unfolds through the voices of those who lived it (Green & Troup, 1999).

RESEARCH METHOD

From an interpretive perspective, the goal is to understand the subjective experience of those participating in the formation of the ASB, representing multiple perspectives of the same event (Burrell & Morgan, 2005). This exploratory study reconstructs the history of the ASB by interviewing the early participants to give voice to their lived experience through stories. In this instance, we are interested in the people who were deans and directors of the schools of business at the critical point in history when the ASB was conceived and began to meet.

Archival records, consisting of program brochures, suggest the ASB was functioning at least by the early to mid 1970's, consequently more than thirty years have passed, and it is reasonable to expect that the deans and directors who were involved at that time are retired, possibly relocated, and potentially deceased. Through word of mouth, former deans and directors of the schools of business were identified and contacted for an interview. Several retired deans still live in the Atlantic Provinces and were eager to meet for an interview and to share their recollections of the formation and early days of the ASB. In total, six former deans or directors were interviewed for this study. An unstructured interview format was used and a list of tentative questions developed to be used as prompts if necessary. It was the intention that the participants be encouraged to tell the stories themselves, highlighting the events and memories that stood out for them. The prepared questions were only used to prompt memories, or to seek specific information if it was not readily recalled. The questions were rarely needed, in fact in one instance when two of the former deans asked to be interviewed together, the stories started before I even arrived, and some scrambling ensued to get pencil and paper ready, and recording equipment started, sharing in a rich,

informative and at times, humorous walk down memory lane.

Interviews were recorded in digital format and later transcribed in print format. The interviews were analyzed using a grounded theory approach, seeking meaning in the stories themselves as they unfolded. The goal of the project was to capture experiences and anecdotes inorder to capture the stories that contribute to the ASB history.

THE EARLY YEARS

A small group of deans and directors from some of the schools of business in Atlantic Canada attended the opening ceremony for the new school of business at the University of Moncton in late 1964. It was suggested by one and heartily agreed to by others that it would be beneficial to meet again, perhaps regularly, *"to trade advice and stories"*. Thus, the seed was planted for the collaboration that became known as the Atlantic Schools of Business (ASB). The following year, in 1965, the first meeting took place. No one is quite certain where that first meeting was held or who took the leadership in hosting the event and inviting the others, but everybody interviewed agreed that the collaboration of this group was a valuable one for all who attended. There were eight schools of business at the time, including Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. Francis Xavier in Antigonish, NS, St. Mary's University, and Dalhousie University in Halifax, Acadia University in Wolfville, NS, Mount Allison University in Sackville,NB, the University of Moncton, and the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, NB. ASB was born, a small collaborative of like-minded business deans and directors, leaders who saw the value of working together for their mutual benefit and unforeseen possibilities.

The structure was very informal, and developed with few guidelines. There were no written rules, no terms of engagement, and no minutes most of the time. People made notes, andif somebody agreed to something, a reminder letter might follow, but "*Nothing was minuted, moved and seconded, it was just a very informal group of people, meeting…*" There was consensus around who would chair the ASB group of deans, and it rotated among the schools depending on who volunteered, or whose turn it was.

The deans were primarily concerned with administration issues such as budget, hiring, committees served on, how represented on key university committees, and student enrollment. From the interviews, several reasons for the collaboration emerged. These included trading advice and stories, the shared experience of being an insignificant player that was "not fit to eat" within the university community, regional cohesiveness in the national arena where they were treated like small potatoes, development of the faculty "farm team", and mutual liking and respect.

Trading advice and stories

The reason for meeting initially was primarily communication that led to shared successes. *"In the early years, we traded advice and stories."*Each school faced similar challenges and members found it beneficial to hear how others were dealing with the same issues within their respective universities and communities.

Transition from 3 to a 4 year program was a major accomplishment of the collaboration, starting

in the late 1960s. In the three Maritime provinces, students were accepted from senior matriculation after grade 12 and students from Ontario were admitted from grade 13, or its equivalent. Students were admitted into a 3-year program, being given credit for certain high school courses. It was called a 4-year program, but most students were exempted from a full year of study. All the deans were in agreement that a 4-year program was essential, but there were all kinds of issues to overcome. Some sacrifices had to be made, and some members needed to be convinced, but eventually agreement was reached, and they were united to get a 4-year program of study for business in the Atlantic Region. That was felt to be a major accomplishment for the ASB and strengthened the programs. It created internal problems for some schools from the admissions officers, but the deans were all united, and it was instituted at all schools. That was felt to be THE major accomplishment at the time, and that success showed them that they could accomplish more together than they could individually.

A second accomplishment that was credited to the friendship between the deans was the development of the centers for small business and entrepreneurship in several of the Atlantic schools, including Memorial University in Newfoundland, Acadia University in Wolfville, the University of Moncton, and the University of Prince Edward Island. The federal funding that enabled the centers to develop came about because of a proposal from one of the deans that was supported and shared throughout the Atlantic region. *"That's an offshoot of the ASB and you can give some credit to that association for getting those centers of small business and entrepreneurship going".*

Not fit to eat.

A second theme that emerged from the interviews concerned the shared experience of being perceived as insignificant players within the university community. Each school of business faced similar challenges as small schools within the larger university environment. ASB members gained mutual support from their peers. At the time, in the mid- 1960s, schools of business were small and typically part of another faculty, generally Arts or Sciences, receiving only a tiny share of funding and scholarships. There was little support withinthe university itself for developing separate business schools and many people saw no place for abusiness program within the university. In one university, when the matter came to a senate vote,it passed by a narrow margin of only 12-11 in favor. The business schools were seen as an anomaly. Typically, the university president and vice president came out of the core disciplines such as the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. One president was fond of saying that the business school was, *"not fit to eat".* Despite evidence that demonstrated that the cost to teach business students was the lowest on campus, the prevailing view was that the business faculty was, *"upstarts from across the road".* There was a false belief that there was no need to increase business faculty salaries because they were making so much money on external consulting.

A change was coming, however, and the explosive growth in student enrollment in the smaller schools of business grew from 50 or 60 students, to 500 or 600 in the space of a decade. As student enrollment began to account for a larger and larger percentage of the student body, the crusade to create a separate faculty for business was successful. Members of the ASB were powerful allies who supported and coached each other in the quest for faculty status. They supported and informed each other on other matters also, such as the creation of named schools

and the development of advisory boards.

"Information was traded. What are you doing about…..? How many students? How are you doing? Are you having problems? Somebody else mightbe able to solve it. Some of the deans were well connected with their President, and with government." Each would find out what the others were doing, then use that information to convince their respective presidents to make a desired change.*" Well this is how they're doing It in …. "*

Small potatoes in the national organization.

A third theme that echoed throughout all the interviews was that of being small potatoes within the national organization. The Canadian Association of Business School Deans met annually and was involved in lobbying the federal government for business school funding, exemptions from various immigration laws that restricted faculty recruitment, and other issues of national concern. The Atlantic schools did not have the long history that some of the larger schools had, and the national conference was dominated by schools such as the University of Toronto, McMaster, Western, Concordia and the others, and were considered the "poor cousins". The Atlantic group met as a subgroup within thenational body, meeting for dinner the evening before or breakfast that morning to discuss issues of common concern. They were seen as a powerful resource, and became a model for other regional groups to get together. They became known as "The Maritime Mafia". In the early days, it was the intent that they would present a united front at national meetings, but that never really happened. It was all about building regional self-confidence. The ASB group had an affinity withthe deans from the Western Provinces, because they had a common "enemy", Central Canada. *"The catalyst for forming ASB was the fact that ASAC didn't meet our needs, with one big annualconference in Calgary or wherever, there was a need for a local thing"* where local concerns could be vetted.

The farm team.

ASB originally consisted of the deans and directors of the Atlantic Schools of Business, meeting and collaborating on problems and issues of mutual concern fromthe mid 1960s. One of the greatest accomplishments that has survived and flourished for nearlyforty years is the annual academic conference held each fall. The most visible part of the ASB collaborative, most people think the academic conference *is* the ASB.

> "*If you said ASB to me, I would think, that's the administrative operation of the Deans and Directors, to raise problems about administrative issues, but if you said that to a professor, he would say, that's the academic organization, where I had the chance to do a paper, and it had nothing to do with the administrative side".*

Because of the rapid expansion within the Atlantic schools during the early years, most faculty were young, inexperienced and few in those days were academics. They were new in the education system and needed opportunities to develop. The deans felt it was imperative that faculty have opportunities to present papers and research, and the chance of being accepted at oneof the larger US conferences was slim because the competition was so fierce, with 300 – 500 papers being submitted in a division. Faculty wanted a first-rate quality conference which

would give first preference to local presenters. The idea was to develop a conference that was less competitive without compromising quality, as a training ground, like a farm team. By restricting it to schools in the region, or at least giving them preference, there was a tendency on the part of some people to say it was a second rate conference, but that was not the case. Cost of travel to conferences in distant places was another factor. By developing a regional conference, rather thansending somebody away for $2000, for $500 a carload of people could go, sharing the ride and expenses. While the main reason for the conference was to enable people to get experience and status by presenting at a forum where papers were refereed and peer reviewed, there was also a social aspect where faculty teaching in similar areas around the Atlantic region could get to know one another.

The first academic conference was in the late 1960s or the very early 1970s and was quite informally organized in the early years. The location rotated from school to school on a voluntary basis, perhaps more often in the larger more central locations that were easier to get to and less costly. The deans were not involved in selecting conference chairs or division chairs, except perhaps to railroad somebody into it. *"Once you agreed to host the event, you either organized it yourself or got somebody to do it. After the first couple of years, the academic side figured things out for themselves, with little input from the deans,"* except to give their support to host it in a given year.

Prominent guests were invited to speak at academic conferences according to who had a contact that might have something timely and interesting to say. *"It was all quite informal."* Frank Stronach, president of Magna Auto Parts whose daughter, Belinda Stronach is an MP, was one of the early speakers. The business schools in the Atlantic region were well connected with the community. *"I remember one suggestion as a speaker was to have the Premier of the province, so we picked up the phone and called him. In the larger centers, you couldn't do that."* The speaker one year when the conference was held at SFX was the president of the Canadian Association of Small Business who had just published a book. *"So we took the Minister of Development with us, to hear him speak"*

A nice group of people.

A final reason given by the participants for why the collaboration was successful was that they genuinely liked each other. *"We met informally, and we knew each other personally."* Even between the scheduled meetings, they talked on the phoneor exchanged letters, discussing matters of common concern, and keeping up with what was happening in each other's schools.

> *"We trusted each other, and that was the great thing, and I don't know, if we were trying to start it now, if it would be nearly as successful. Everybody was equal around the table. Nobody tried to sway things. I don't recall seeing ourselves as competitors. We were in the same business together ... why not make sure we were all doing a good job?"*

They looked forward to meeting together several times a year, enjoying lively conversation over dinner the evening before, and extending the stories and laughter through the business meetings the following day. There was a sense that there might have been something different about the deans at that time, something that was perhaps unique to that era in history. *"When you talk aboutthese*

people, you are talking about a bunch of people who spent their entire career in one place. You don't see that these days. They started teaching too early, it is unlikely to have a 40 year career these days. You just won't see that".

Although all the schools were chronically short of qualified faculty, there was never a sense that they were "stealing" from one another. If there was a vacancy, and somebody knew a person who wanted to relocate there, perhaps for family reasons or to go back home, they would share that information and perhaps facilitate the hiring. "*When we started, the only competition was among the recruiting people at the Registrar's office, and their competition wasn't all that strong".* Changing roles and passing years may have removed the formal reasons for spending time together, but several of the retired deans still keep in touch, and are keenly interested in what their friends are doing now. It is obvious that even after forty years, the affection for one another remains. It was suggested that it would be fun to host a "reunion" where the deans who were involved in the early formative years of the ASB could share their stories, and perhaps spark some long-forgotten memories. If the stories shared thus far are any indication, bringing the group together would be a very rich experience!

Conclusion

The lost history of the ASB has been richly informed by the stories shared by some of the original deans and directors. In the mid-1960s, this group of men saw a need for a regional collaboration between the Atlantic schools of business in order to discuss matters of mutual concern in the Atlantic region. The interviews suggest that there was a strong bond and abiding affection between the early members of the ASB that has survived both the passage of time and forty years worth of changes in the personal and professional lives of the members, and in the schools themselves.

Storytelling is how we make sense out of confusion and create individual and organizational identity, transforming random happenings into a memorable story and creating a history in the process (Kearney, 2002). Stories proceed from stories, and it is hoped that by capturing some early memories of the ASB, more stories will emerge, and that the collaboration known as the ASB will have a stronger sense of what it is, as a result of better understanding why it is.

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Histories of the Atlantic Schools of Business, 2006-2022

The five histories of the Atlantic Schools of Business that we showcased here were drawn from a rich tapestry of papers that were presented at ASB and other conferences since 2006 until 2022. For those interested in the various histories and historic accounts most of these papers will be available from the ASB website by the end of the year (2021).

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