

The system I chose to analyze and reflect upon this week in a rather complicated one to outsiders. I should rephrase that last sentence, it is rather complicated to all involved the more I think about it. In my short time in this class already, I am realizing that the things and particular the systems I think I understand well, actually contain a lot of mysteries. Digging deeper and understanding why things work and react the way they do will help me understand my system of choice today: Officiating Development Program (ODP).

The ODP is a hired group of independent contractors around the United States working upper level hockey games progressing through the program's development model. Each official works diligently to impress management and supervisors in order to move on to the next level.

I have been struggling the past few days going back and forth with myself to use this system or not. As hockey season is beginning, I have been questioning how this system acts and reacts to certain feedback and actions by certain actors. With my three lectures of knowledge, I thought this was an appropriate time to examine the parts of this system, and reflect more deeply on a system that have a great impact on one of my hobbies.

The parts at the most basic level are the officials, supervisors, and management. Each individual in one of these positions would rightfully so call themselves part of the ODP. The relationships of the system are like that of most "businesses". The managers determine the standard of play for which the officials are going to call the game. Those ideals are passed down to the supervisors for careful consideration when viewing officials, and to the officials themselves to implement in their respective games. Another relationship is that of the official's performance in a game. How well they do is determined by the supervisor at the game which is then passed on to management for determination in future assignments and job status.

The links/relationships I just mentioned both seem to move in a very vertical fashion. Each relationship depends on an action and reaction. Information is passed down the stream from the top to the bottom, and performance is passed up the stream from workers to decision makers. As mentioned in the reading from Tuesday, information holds systems together and plays a great role in determining how they operate. This is extremely true of the ODP.

The function of the ODP, is to supply officials to the hockey leagues they are contracted with. One could go deeper and say to supply quality, consistent, and fair officials to the leagues they work with. The function of a business or organization can be gleaned from their mission statement. Is this always the case? I do not believe so. Sometimes management does not ask the right questions and does not have the right conversations when strategically planning. Other times, what they thought the system would function as at the beginning, has changed and they have not taken the time to observe how it is different down the timeline and adjust their vision appropriately. Functions may not be realized all together, but rather relied on by other systems. Someone may be dependent on your system's effect on society without you even knowing. This was true in our in-class activity on Tuesday. X number of people in the room changed their behavior based on my activities. I will never know who those people were that were dependent on me. There are multiple examples in the world of interdependencies being unobserved by one of the dependent parts.

It has become evident that all systems are different, and what makes one system succeed, is not necessarily the happy path for another system. When looking back at my reading notes from Tuesday, I have found myself making sort of a checklist of facts describe by the other in what constitutes a system. As I move down the list, I feel successful when parts of my system adhere to the guidelines set in Chapter 1. Can the system function without one of the parts? Yes, but at a certain point would fall apart without enough people. At its base level, my actions could

be removed and myself easily replace. Another example of one of these checklist-like examples would be: is the stock the foundation of the system? Yes, the officials are the stock and certainly the foundation of the ODP. At what point is the threshold of characteristics a system needs to be considered a system? I do not think we can set a limit on this. In my current understanding of systems, one needs to work through a systems parts, relationships, and functions before they can come to a determination. By breaking down these qualities, one can deduce how close to a “system” it is.

Systems are complicated with lots of unknowns. As it stands right now, I believe the ODP is truly a system with stocks, feedback, parts, relationships, and of course a function. Do these feedbacks and relationships work like any of my classmates' systems, probably not. This is what makes systems so interesting in my opinion, the variability and uniqueness of each system.