

# Core body of knowledge for the OHS profession and Safety Rules vs Reality



David Borys



# Overview

- Part 1 – The core body of knowledge for the OHS profession
- Part 2 - Safety Rules vs Reality





# Part 1

## The Core Body of Knowledge for the OHS Profession



# Overview

1. Where have we come from: Education?
2. The problem
3. Where have we come from: Community perception ?
4. Rationale for BoK
5. Body of Knowledge project



# Where have we come from: Education?

	Strengths	Challenges
<b>1970s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety Certificate courses conducted across 3 states</li><li>• Need for specialised OHS qualifications identified by government</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of uniformity of courses inhibited development of the profession</li></ul>
<b>1980s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First tertiary course conducted</li><li>• By end of 80s 13 tertiary institutes teaching OHS programs</li><li>• Curriculum guidelines developed through workshop of OHS educators</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confusion over roles</li><li>• Activities focused on processing information</li></ul>



# Where have we come from: Education?

	Strengths	Challenges
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•OHS degrees, GDs, Masters</li><li>•National curriculum for Diploma</li><li>•First national conference OHS educators</li><li>•Publication of Guidance Note on tertiary courses</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Development of OHS education considered to be fragmented, adhoc and partly dictated by availability of expertise, little attempt at planning</li><li>•Quality, relevance and delivery of OHS courses questioned</li><li>•Little interest in OHS education by regulators</li></ul>



## Where have we come from. Education?

	Strengths	Challenges
2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•17 universities offering programs</li><li>•Nationally endorsed competencies for OHS vocational courses</li><li>•OHS programs available through a range of delivery modes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•OHS generally a secondary discipline studied part-time for fee-paying mature age students</li><li>•OHS not valued as a discipline within universities</li><li>•Difficulty in obtaining qualified &amp; experienced educators</li><li>•Demise of OHS degrees threaten the profession</li><li>•Emphasis on distance mode</li><li>•OHS vocational programs taught by a wide range of government and privately funded bodies</li><li>•Lack of an agreed core body of knowledge</li></ul>



# The problem

- No regulatory framework or education requirements
- Lack of uniformity across OHS education programs hinders professional recognition
- Impacts on delivery of advice to improve OHS
- Impacts on influence to achieve change



# Where have we come from: Community perception ?

*“...This industry may benefit from some form of industry based accreditation scheme, similar to those operating in the accounting field, so that customers can gain a level of confidence about the consultants that they may engage”*

*(Maxwell, 2004 p. 271).*



# Rationale for BoK

*"A profession is a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as possessing **special knowledge** and skills in a **widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level**, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others. ..."*

(Professions Australia, 1997)



# Body of Knowledge project

## Develop Body of Knowledge

1. Data Collection phase

2. Analyse Data

3. Stakeholder Consultation

4. Draft BOK

5. Validate BOK

## Implement Body of Knowledge

1. Define course accreditation

2. Define professional certification

3. Investigate university collaboration options

4. Participating universities work towards Course accreditation

5. Future recommendations



# Project management

**WorkSafe**  
VICTORIA  
Funding  
body



**HaSPA**  
Oversight of  
project



**SIA**  
Contract Holder &  
Financial  
Governance

**Development of BoK**



**Technical Panel**  
SIA, RMIT, La Trobe University,  
Ballarat University  
**Consultation**  
Plus SIA reps

**Implementation of BoK**



**Course  
Accreditation**

University reps  
SIA reps



**Professional  
Certification**

Industry reps  
OHS professional reps  
SIA reps



Project management, expert facilitation, consulting support, and stakeholder liaison

# Questions grappled with

- Who is the generalist OHS professional?
- What is a Body of Knowledge?
- How should the OHS Body of Knowledge be described or structured?
- What should the OHS Body of Knowledge look like?



# Who is the generalist OHS professional?

“one who applies a multidisciplinary Body of Knowledge to provide enterprises with advice on the organisational arrangements that will lead to the systemic and systematic management and reduction of fatality, injury, disease and ill-health”



# What is a Body of Knowledge?

The **collective knowledge** that should be **shared** by Australian **generalist OHS professionals** to provide a sound basis for understanding the aetiology and control of work-related fatality, injury, disease and ill-health (FIDI)

This knowledge can be described in terms of **key concepts** and **language**, its **core theories** and related empirical **evidence** and the application of these to promote a safe and healthy workplace.



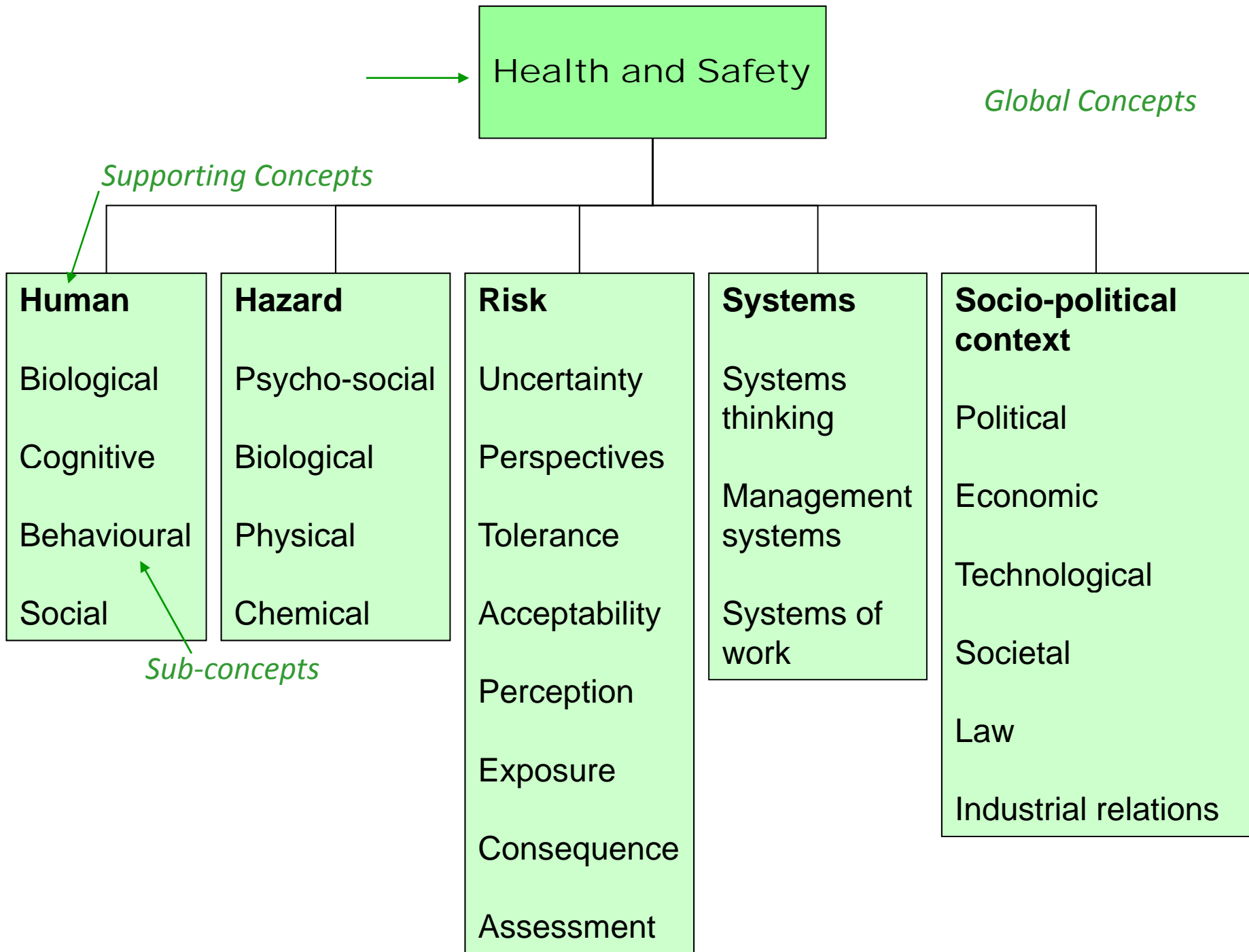
# How should the OHS Body of Knowledge be described or structured?

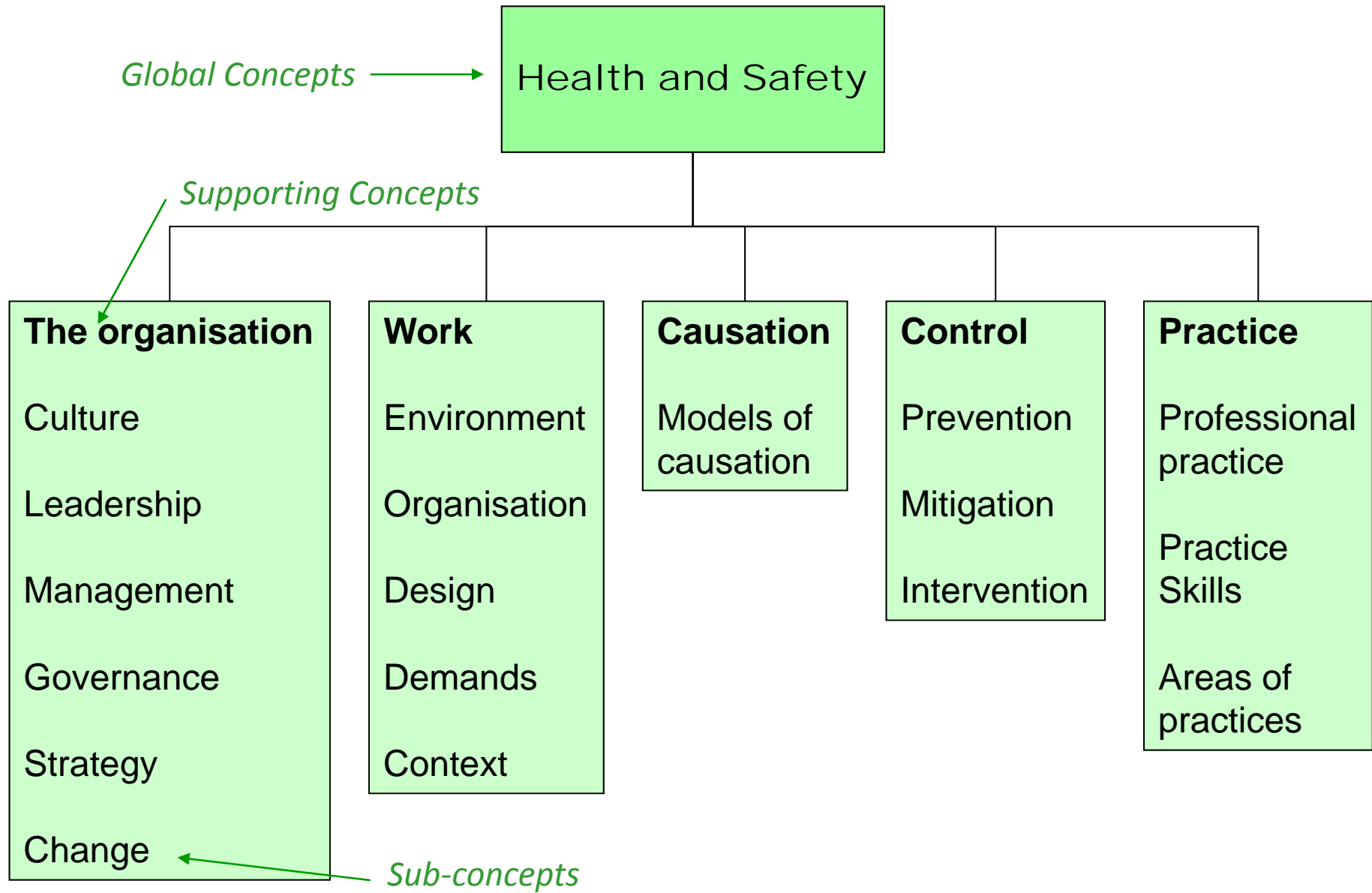
Global concepts

Supporting concepts

Sub-concepts







# What should the OHS Body of Knowledge look like?

- A book available in electronic format
- Series of chapters addressing concepts and sub-concepts
- A succinct written summary for each concept and sub concept



# Chapter outline

- Title
- Abstract
- Definitions
- Historical development of concept
- **Main content**
- Implications for practice
- Key authors and thinkers
- Links to other concepts in the BoK
- References

DRAFT



# Writing process

- Invitations to make an expression of interest to write and or validate specific concepts or sub concepts
- Review of expressions of interest and allocation of tasks
- Review of drafts and initial editing
- Validation (review by alternative and perhaps OHS professional)
- Professional editing



## Part 2

# Safety Rules vs Reality



# Overview

1. A short story about rule violation
2. The adaptive age and safety rules
3. The argument
4. Trust as an organising principle
5. Questions to consider



# A story about rule violation



# The fifth age of safety: The adaptive age

1 Technical age Hale & Hovden, (1998)	2 Human factors age	3 Management systems age	4 Integration age Glendon et al. (2006)	<b>5 Adaptive age</b>
1 Technical wave Hudson, (2007)	2 Systems wave	3 Culture wave		

# The adaptive age and safety rules

- Bourrier (1998):
  - View reliability as being brought about through social interactions
  - Understand that organisational reliability is socially constructed through flexible and adaptive control systems
  - Understand that rule adaptation is a source of reliability
  - Build-in processes that enable workers to modify rules and procedures



# The adaptive age and safety rules

- Rasmussen (1994):
  - Provide ample opportunity to modify rules according to local conditions, even for familiar situations for which accepted rules exist



# The argument

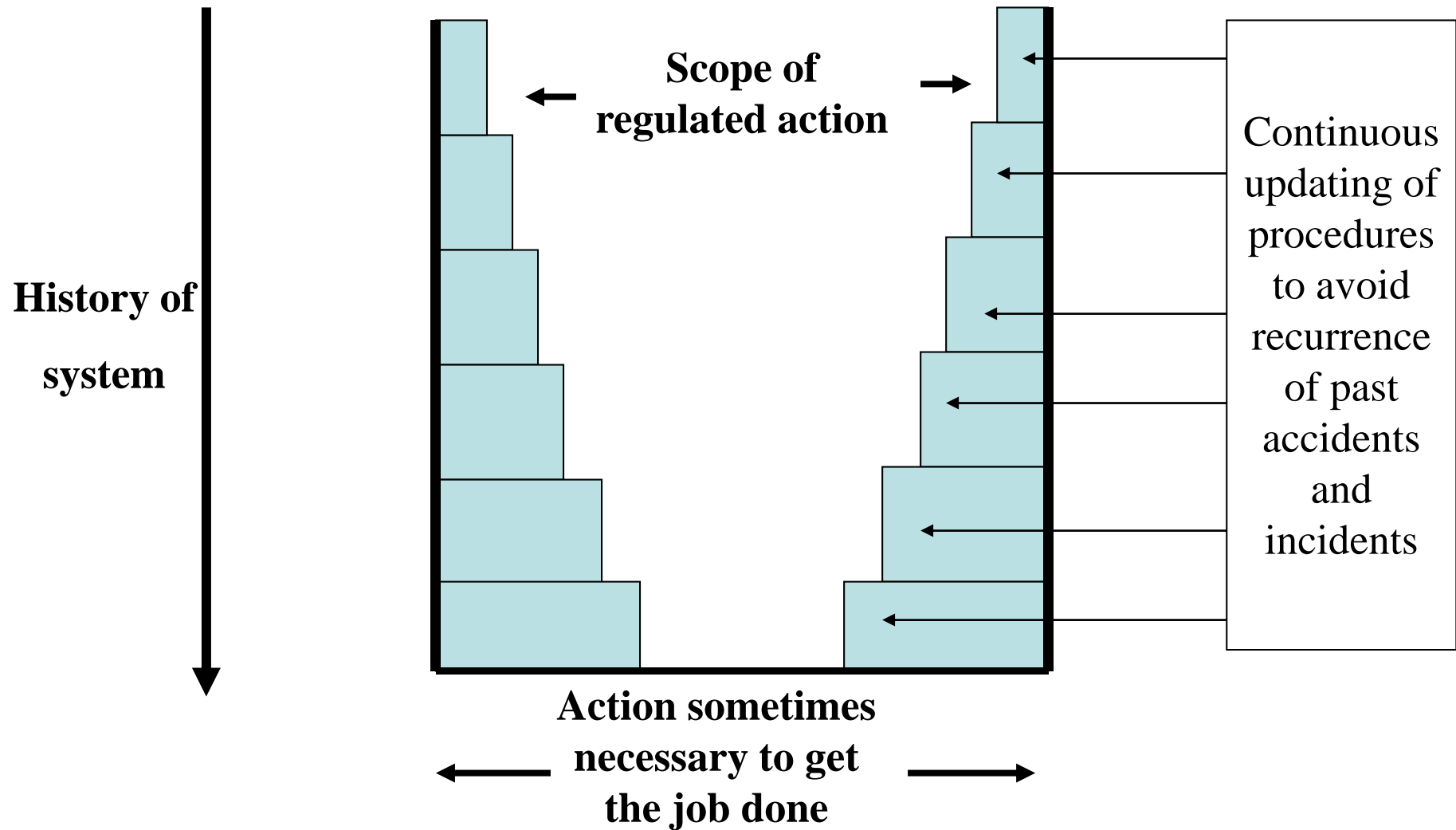
- There is evidence that people break rules (Alper & Karsh, 2009)
- Yet we keep writing more rules (Reason, 1997, Turner & Gray, 2009)
- This can result in a gap between rules and reality (Antonsen et al. 2008) – **the reality gradient principle** (Borys & Else, 2009)
- Limit the number and content of rules
- Provide workers and supervisors with the discretion to adapt the rules to match circumstances
- This requires **trust** and possibly a **perspective change**

# The reality gradient principle

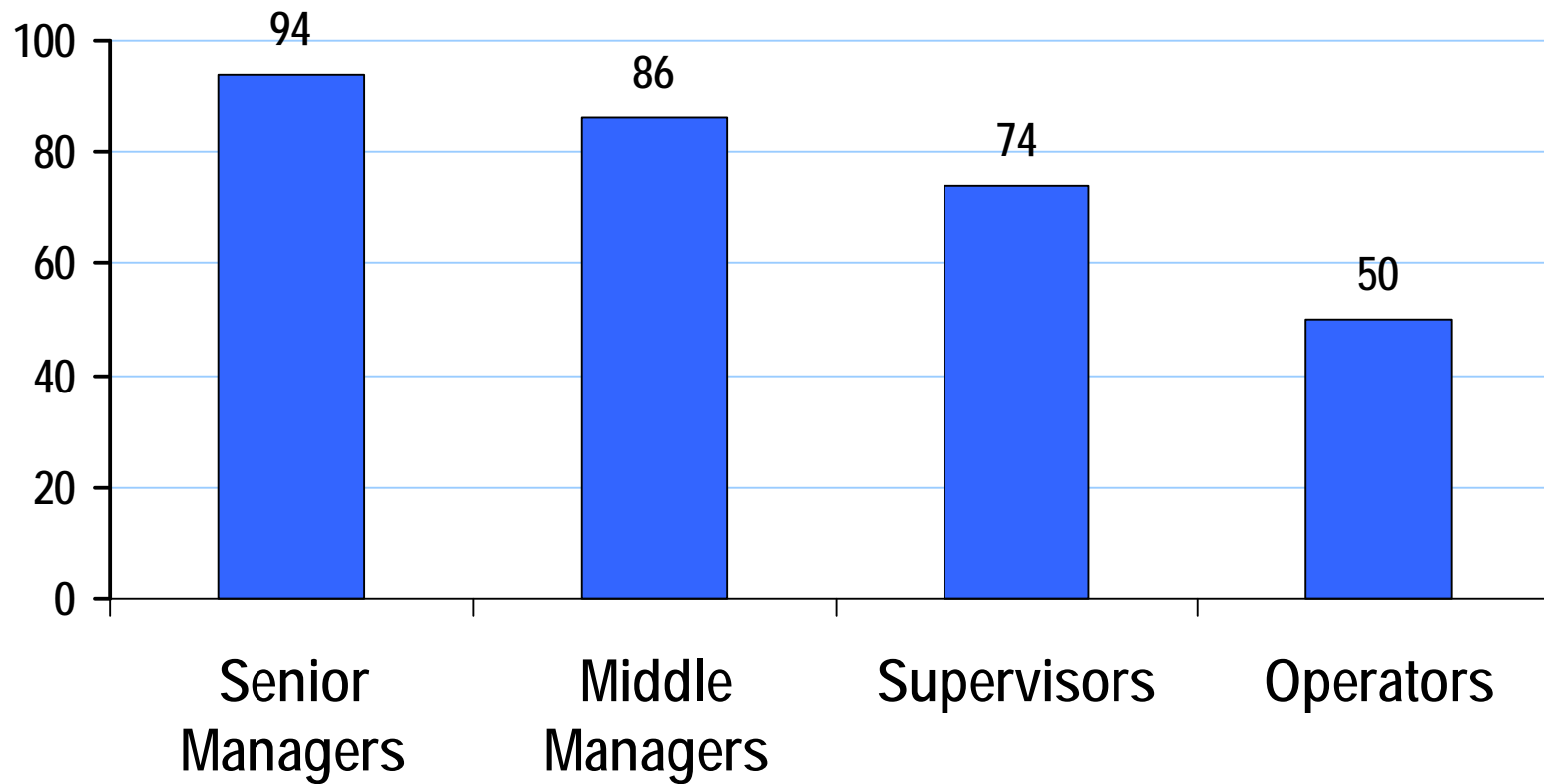
- Seek out, understand and respond to gaps between work as imagined and work as performed



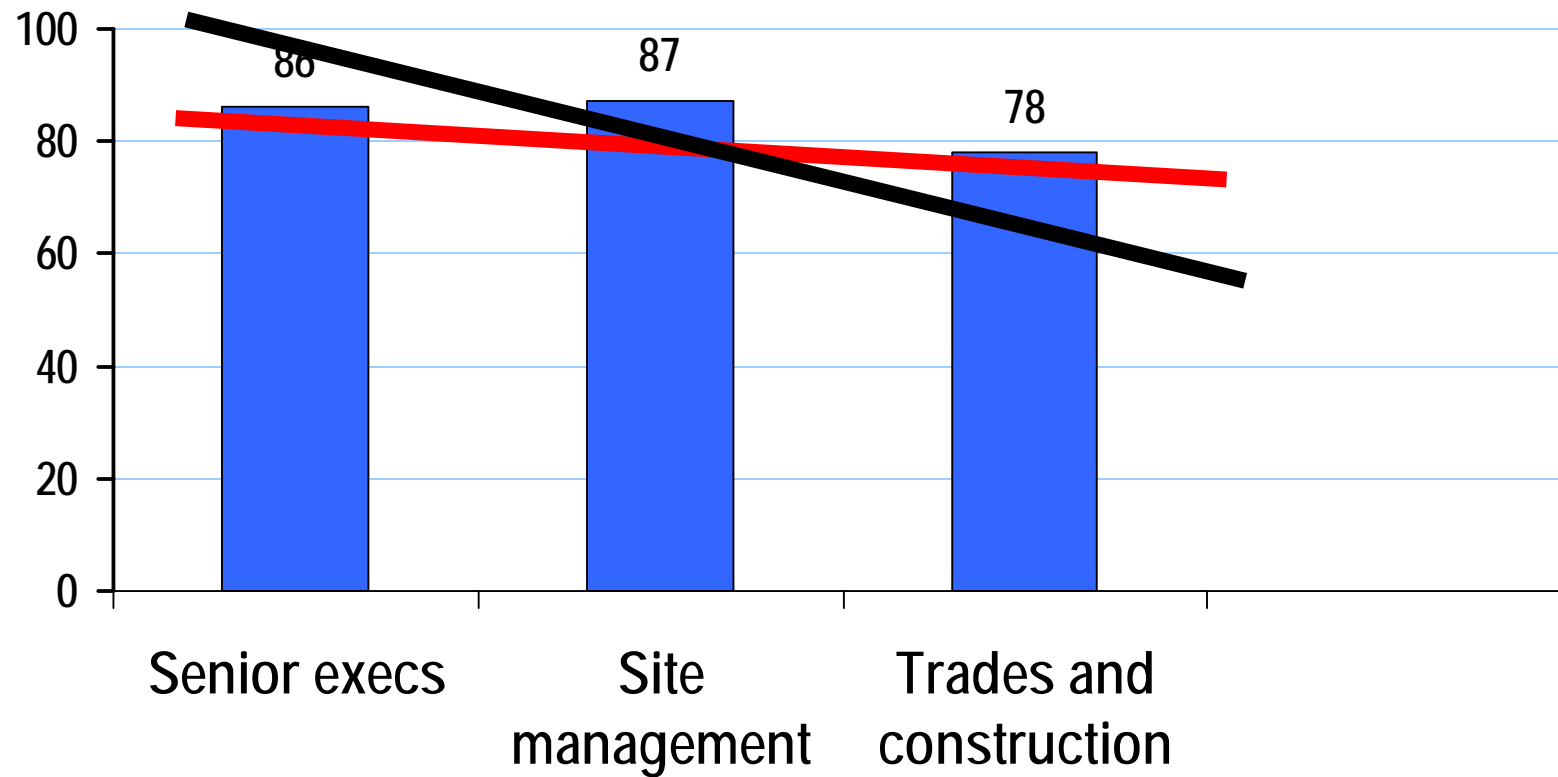
# Can rules become too restrictive?



“I know people don't have to break safety rules to get jobs done”



“I know people don't have to break safety rules to get jobs done”



# Perspective change

Theory W : Managerial perspective (technological optimism)	Theory Z: Systemic perspective (technological realism)
<p>Things go right because:</p> <p><b>Systems</b> are well designed and scrupulously maintained</p> <p><b>Procedures</b> are complete and correct</p> <p><b>People behave</b> as they are expected to – as they are <i>taught</i></p> <p><b>Designers</b> can foresee and anticipate every contingency</p>	<p>Things go right because people:</p> <p>Learn to <b>overcome</b> design flaws and functional glitches</p> <p><b>Adapt</b> their performance to meet demands</p> <p><b>Interpret</b> and <b>apply</b> procedures to match conditions</p> <p>Can <b>detect</b> and <b>correct</b> when things go wrong</p>
<p>Humans are a <b>liability</b> and variability is a threat. The purpose of design is to constrain variability, so that efficiency can be maintained.</p>	<p>Humans are an <b>asset</b> without which the proper functioning of modern technological systems would be impossible.</p>

# Trust as an organising principle

- Trust:

*the willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations about another's intentions or behaviours*



# Trust as an organising principle

- This definition of trust places management in a bind
- Because there are at least two reciprocal trust loops operating in OHS:
  - The first is between the regulator and management
  - The second between management and the workers
- The latter may not be possible without the former and it is the former that places management in a bind



# Trust as an organising principle

- With trust comes:
  - Pride
  - Respect



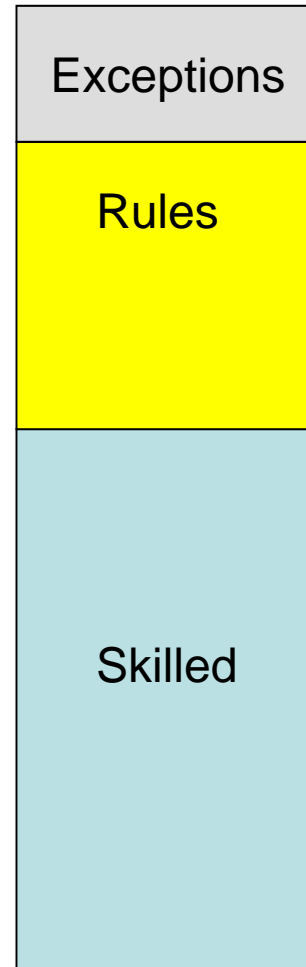
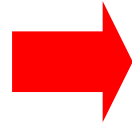
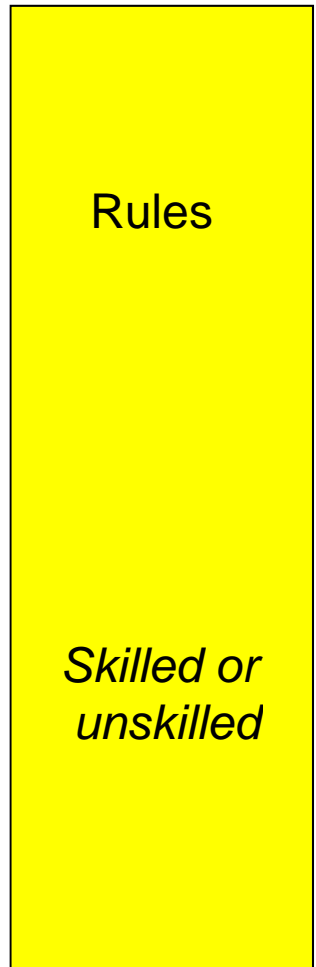
# Rule compliance

- Causal compliance (Hopkins, 2010)
- Managed compliance
  - We need to think about the relative role of:
    - Supervision
    - Workers
    - Rules
    - Skill
    - Context



From this ...

to this?



# SWMS research project

- **Aims:**

- To explore how managers and workers interpret and use SWMS
- To find out if there were gaps between the SWMS and practice

- **Key findings:**

- Viewed positively and important for safety
- No gap between the SWMS and practice
- Because there was an informal process of intense social interaction at different points in time, particularly in relation to jobs that were “out of the ordinary”
- SWMS were simply a place to document the conversation



# Questions to consider

- Do you know if you have a gap between your safety rules and reality?
- How do you manage your safety rules?
- How do you manage exceptions?
- How do you manage discretion?
- What is the relative role of supervision, workers, rules, skills and context in your organisation?

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