

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229651719>

After excellence: Models of organizational culture for the public sector

Article in *Australian Journal of Public Administration* · March 2008

DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8500.1991.tb02293.x

CITATIONS

48

READS

2,976

1 author:



Amanda Sinclair

University of Melbourne

56 PUBLICATIONS 3,574 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

AFTER EXCELLENCE: MODELS OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

AMANDA SINCLAIR*

Abstract: Organisational culture is recognised as a critical ingredient of organisational effectiveness. However, the popular "excellence" model of managing organisational culture is unsuited to the contingencies and character of many public sector organisations. Termed here the cultural control model, it is the only widely shared understanding of good culture and how to create it. As a generic prototype of culture it is limited, since it relies on management imposing a culture on a work force devoid of subcultural conflict. Three other models of organisational culture are introduced which offer more promise for the public sector: the subcultural model; the professional-managerial multiculture; and the public service or public interest model. These other models recognise in the culture-building strategies they prescribe that culture is deeply-rooted and not readily malleable by management and that subcultures affect organisations in various, not necessarily negative, ways. While the cultural control model reminds us of the significance of culture to better management, subsequent research has refined models of organisational culture which are more consistent with the values and ethics of professionalism and good administration.

This paper examines the applicability to the public sector of the prevailing orthodoxy of organisational culture and proposes more complex views of the way culture and subcultures interact to affect organisational outcomes.

The widespread focus of attention on organisational culture has flowed, amongst other things, from a conviction that moulding organisational culture offers a means of orchestrating organisational change. Public sector managers, like their private sector counterparts, have been encouraged to view culture as a particularly promising tool in the managerial kitbag.

This managerial view, which implies that management controls culture, has been shown to be fatally flawed. This paper draws together the results of applications and research to delineate some other models of the way cultures work, particularly in public sector organisations with their own particular cultural contingencies.

The meaning and power of organisational culture

Organisational culture consists of what people believe about how things work in organisations and the behavioural outcomes of those beliefs. It reflects the learned experiences of employees in responding to organisational programs and is "passed on" to new recruits (Schein 1985). Despite academic arguments that culture is not something that organisations have (Smircich 1983), there is a popular understanding of what organisational culture is and that it is important.

Culture can contribute to organisational effectiveness through fostering a sense of purpose, a shared set of meanings which are both consistent and adaptable and a sense of ownership or involvement which reduces the need for other kinds of organisational control (Denison 1990). An organisation's culture is regarded as a critical determinant of performance and as one of the most promising mechanisms management can use to achieve control and coordination.

As a tool of control, culture is potentially superior to other mechanisms, such as economic rewards or formalised rules (Wilkins & Ouchi 1983). This superiority derives from its combined subtlety and power to mobilise: it is a "tacit" means of mining additional sources of

* The author wishes to thank two anonymous referees for very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

"mobilisation and direction" towards organisational ends (Kilmann 1985, pp.ix-x). "Cultural management comes to be preferred to the old direct methods of control because it appears to be more inclusive, more pervasive and less identifiable" (Anthony 1990, p.4).

But culture is not always readily malleable in the organisational interest. Firstly, it is deeply rooted in basic assumptions and values, "mostly taken for granted by organization members" (Gagliardi 1990), and it is a product of broader national, racial and religious cultures (Schein 1983; Lorsch 1985; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv & Sanders 1990; Adler 1986). Culture is not something that can be imposed from above — it only works effectively where it is internalised. Paradoxically for those who exhort the control of cultures as a tool of change, it tends to be highly resistant to change because it is so deeply rooted.

Organisational culture is conceptualised as comprised of layers, the inside layer of values being more deeply held, more resistant to change and more influential in determining what people really think and do. Many doubt that an organisation can, or should, attempt to influence underlying values (Schein 1984). The outer layers of rituals, symbols and heroes are all "practices" which are more amenable to moulding by the organisation. While managers console themselves with securing superficial behavioural conformity, this hardly provides an accurate reflection of culture (Anthony 1990).

Secondly, once organisational culture is conceptualised as encompassing multiple occupational, functional, professional and other identifications, the organisational task becomes one of working out the conflicts and ambiguities emergent from the encounter of different norms, rather than maintaining a united cultural front.

What can or should organisations do about their cultures? They cannot afford to ignore them, though the prevailing model of how to change them may be nothing more than tinkering with the behavioural artefacts. Gagliardi highlights the conundrums — organisational culture is both inaccessible and very influential. It can be a "resource for organizational integration" when it reinforces the "virtuous circle" of managerial instrumental strategies (1990, p.159). But this readily converts to a vicious circle when the norms of different

subcultures conflict and the interests of management are construed as the norms of a new and threatening subculture.

Such conditions of subcultural conflict exist in many Australian public sector organisations. The "excellence" model advises the creation of a new cohesive culture around managerially defined values. There are many organisations and many public sector managers for whom this is no solution. Three other models are elaborated which have successively responded to the weaknesses of the cultural control model and also match more closely the identified circumstances and character of public sector organisations.

The public sector and cultural contingencies

The differences between private and public sector organisations have been widely documented (Rainey, Backoff & Levine 1976; Allison 1980; Perry & Rainey 1988, Bozeman 1987; Sinclair 1989). While there are different ways of categorising and weighting them, there is agreement that each of these environmental, structural and cultural features has profound effects on the way people work. In particular, the political nature of public administration and resulting accountability to an amorphous and complex client (Painter 1987) and the importance of equity, as well as efficiency in the delivery of services, influence the content and strength of existing cultures and subcultures in public sector organisations. Also, fragmentation in the locus of decision-making and authority; multiple, intangible and conflicting goals; more hierarchical controls and resulting formalisation, centralisation and less incentive for cost-reduction, and political pressures which create high stakes and politically-determined time-frames, have significant impacts on the way work is done (Bozeman 1987).

How external controls and constituencies translate themselves into structural and cultural responses is the subject of extensive research (see for example Meyer & Rowan 1977; Kenny *et al* 1987). But there is agreement that cultures mirror structures and external contingencies, that beneath and supporting the formal structures of public sector organisations is a "psychological structure of bureaucracy" (Crozier 1964;

Hummel 1982; Baum 1987).

We cannot irrefutably conclude that public and private organisations have different cultures. The small amount of research on organisational cultures tends to be case-based, rather than comparative, and more substantial surveys are of American organisations (Perry & Rainey 1988). Research on international cultural differences requires that extrapolation from other countries to Australia is significantly qualified.

However, a modest amount of evidence supports the conclusion that employees of the public sector have different attitudes to their jobs. Surveys indicate that people who work in the public sector tend to report being more motivated by altruism: "they believed that through public positions they could contribute to the development of society, perform worthwhile functions and work for the public benefit" (EZI 1989, p.48). They "seek a special sort of influence over public choices" (Kelman 1988, p.46).

Baum postulates interconnected motivations from his survey of American administrators and planners. Nobility or the prospect of participating in broad-sweep social change was the most important motivator, followed by the lure of being "valued and (given) influence in return for their intelligence" (1987, p.16). Rawls *et al* (1975) similarly found that public managers are seeking to change and, consistent with other findings, that they put a higher value on service and a lower value on financial rewards (also Rainey *et al* 1976).

Baum (1976) also identified the opportunity to exercise power as a motivator, but noted administrators had an ambivalent attitude. On the one hand they saw themselves as intellectual practitioners, apart from the power-mongering of party politics and unwilling to identify themselves as political. One obvious reason for this reluctance is its inconsistency with traditional concepts of impartiality and a single chain of accountability. On the other hand, they advocated highly political courses of action. Their strong identification with "the public interest" appears to allow them to be political, in the sense of being concerned about important issues and skilful in delivering worthwhile outcomes, without being tainted by party politics.

Employees often enter the public sector with a strong professional or occupational identification. Reinforced by union affiliation or by close client relationships, the employee's identification with the organisation is inevitably weakened (Kouzes & Mico 1983). Some public sector agencies, such as ministerial departments, have a particularly high number of occupational groups (Hood & Dunsire 1981).

The public sector is the largest employer of professionals (Cherniss & Kane 1987). Many see the organisation as a means to an end, a way of doing the work they want to do, and they have high aspirations of autonomy and intrinsic fulfilment. Consequently, professionals tend to have a low tolerance for organisation or management-imposed constraints, which they perceive jeopardise their own values. These values, supported by occupational, union or professional membership, are further reinforced by the particular disciplinary/functional structure prevalent in public sector organisations. Professional values are also invoked in particular organisational circumstances, for example, where there is a very close working relationship with clients or "in situations of high feedback" where employees "develop a higher level belief in public service, . . . make greater use of their profession as a reference group and develop a greater sense of calling or dedication" (Yaeger, Rabin & Vocino 1985, p.573). In other organisational circumstances where their professional commitment is frustrated, they reduce their aspirations and displace their sources of self-actualisation onto other targets (Cherniss & Kane 1987; Raelin 1986). Significantly from an organisational culture point of view, such targets are often outside the organisation.

Given this motivational underpinning, it is not surprising to find that public sector managers, including chief administrators, report higher levels of frustration in their jobs than their private sector counterparts. Two findings stand out. First, they perceive less control in decision-making and report lower feelings of autonomy, self-actualisation, "goal and action" and leadership conceptualisation competencies (Bozeman 1987).¹ They also perceive that efficiency is less prevalent in policy, that rewards are not so closely tied to performance and they generally report a lower level of *organisational*

commitment' than their counterparts in the private sector (Bozeman 1987; Perry & Rainey 1988). In contrast, private sector managers report more positive job attitudes with a stronger identification and commitment to the organisation (Buchanan 1974). The second finding is that public sector managers have higher levels of formal and informal interaction with external groups and they recognise the importance of external constituencies (Kenny *et al* 1987).

A resistance to change is also argued by many to be a hallmark of bureaucratic organisations, stemming from their formalisation and budgetary and personnel processes which favour inertia and immortality rather than adaptability (Meyer 1985). However, the cultural phenomenon of resistance to change is difficult to measure, and organisational survival rates depend on how organisational death is defined. Kaufman's argument that government organisations are more stable (1976) has been controversial. Further, Pollitt (1984) records a high rate of births, deaths and marriages of government organisations in the British civil service, suggesting that some forms of change such as structural re-organisation are prevalent in the public sector.

These external, structural and cultural features of public organisations pose particular challenges for models of organisational culture. Attempts to change the culture of local public sector organisations have largely been guided by the model of cultural excellence derived from private sector organisational experience. But subsequent experience in applying these lessons to other sorts of organisations has raised questions. Commentators agree that the role of leadership in creating culture is critical, but who is the leader of a government department and what is the impact of fragmented decision-making? How is a strong organisational identification forged when employees have an overriding commitment to their definition of the public interest, when conflict over the means and ends of agency activity prevails and when ties to other affiliations and particular client groups are entrenched? While the cultural control model of organisational culture prescribes that management should prevail in these circumstances, other models suggest more contingency-

responsive cultural strategies.

Models of culture

The cultural control model

According to the prevailing orthodoxy, termed here the cultural control model, an ideal organisation culture is strong, unifying and exclusive. It is pervasive or widely shared by all members of the organisation, it is deeply felt not just adhered to at a superficial level, and therefore capable of determining behaviour, and it is consistent across and entrenched in organisational subsystems.

This recipe maintains that management must develop by various means a culture which is unique to the organisation, but universally championed within the organisation. Creating and maintaining a strong culture requires clear steps, commencing with the development of a corporate philosophy or mission which is widely promulgated. Effort is devoted, particularly by people at the top, to modelling and reinforcing the values of the organisational culture, through the design of physical spaces, the development of symbols, rituals and ceremonies, and the use of recruitment and reward systems, information systems and structures.

Fashioning and reinforcing values and beliefs, through socialisation, role modelling and rituals, is regarded as a critical, yet misunderstood responsibility of senior management (Pondy & Mitroff 1979; Smircich & Morgan 1982).

Peters and Waterman (1983) quote Tom Watson, Chairman of IBM and one of the high priests of this approach, describing the power of a strong culture:

the basic philosophy, spirit and drive of an organisation have far more to do with its relative achievements than do technological and economic resources ... structure, innovation and timing. All these things weigh heavily in success. But they are I think transcended by how strongly the people in the organisation believe in its basic precepts and how faithfully they carry them out (p.280).

Culture control is a model developed largely by American commentators from the example of large private sector Japanese and American companies during the late 1970s and 1980s (Peter & Waterman 1983; Deal & Kennedy 1982; Ouchi

1981). Experiencing comparatively poor company performance in comparison to their Japanese counterparts, these management experts diagnosed the problem as the absence of a strong corporate culture. Such a culture, it was alleged, existed in Japanese organisations and successful American companies. None of the organisations from which this evidence and model were derived fell within the public sector.

This approach to organisational culture remains enthusiastically preached and embraced, in all sorts of organisations. However, evidence amasses that it is not only infeasible, but also undesirable because of inflexibility, and morally distasteful because of manipulative overtones. Further, it is a model which is quickly exhausted of its usefulness when applied to different types of organisations, with quite different external pressures, workforce compositions and national and local cultures. The objections to the cultural control model highlight why it might be both an unsuitable and unworkable cultural prototype for many public sector organisations. Yet it is an approach which many such organisations are emulating in the absence of convincingly argued alternatives.

The subcultural model

Although it is possible for an organisation to have a cohesive and unitary culture, it is more likely that organisations host various subcultures and that these proliferate with professionalisation and specialisation (Kanter 1984).

While subcultures can be defined in various ways (Rose 1988), here they are not treated as miniature organisational cultures or the specific beliefs of functional or other groups within organisations. Rather, they are conceptualised as groups whose members and values transcend organisational boundaries. Members of subcultures can share an occupational commitment, union affiliation or sense of "community". Some subcultures have self-defined boundaries; a social, not just organisational, identity; they are the host for social relationships and support a measure of self-determination to their members in the definition and evaluation of their work. A subcultural identification will thus provide a member with a meaning and identity which carries across contexts. Engineers or social

workers will identify themselves most strongly with the values of their occupational groups regardless of whether their employer is a company, government agency or consulting firm. Subcultural membership can also supply reserves of internalised commitment and control. Organisational culture, in contrast, is "a set of responses to specific managerial practices in the office" (Van Maanen & Barley 1984, p.308), like a cloak which an individual assumes temporarily and expediently when crossing the workplace threshold.

Research supports the proposition that people's values and norms about their work are primarily the product of national, racial, religious and occupational socialisation. Organisational culture is the last and most easily discarded lawyer of socialisation. If in conflict, national cultural identification will override occupational identification, which will in turn override organisational identification:

Values are acquired in our early youth, in the family, neighbourhood and school . . . entering an occupational field means the acquisition of both values and practices; the place of socialization is the school or university . . . Organisational practices, on the other hand are learned through socialisation at the workplace, which we usually enter, as adults, with the bulk of our values firmly in place (Hofstede *et al* 1990, p.312).

The subcultural model argues that strong uniform cultures can be a liability and that subcultures provide better insurance for organisational flexibility. An overly cohesive organisational culture may sponsor "groupthink" and "strategic myopia" (Lorsch 1985) where the like-minded form insulated enclaves. The outcomes include an insensitivity to a changing environment (Weick 1985) and an illusion of invulnerability which can severely impair organisational performance. Decision-making research supports the subcultural hypothesis that the more complex the environment, the more important it is to have differentiation in the views of senior management (Bourgeois 1984; Beyer 1981). And subcultures are regarded as an essential ingredient of organisational innovation (Kanter 1988).

The subcultural model also maintains that respect of subcultural allegiances is more

defensible from an ethical perspective than the imposition of a management-inspired culture. Because of an absence of a critical tradition for national cultural reasons, much of the American research "rarely distinguished between the values of founders and significant leaders and the values of the bulk of the organization's members" (Hofstede *et al* 1990 p.311). Hofstede and his colleagues argue that populist recipes widely overstate the absence of conflict between the top of the organisation, the middle and the bottom. Corporate mythology tends to protect the power elite and there may be psychological costs for those at the bottom of the hierarchy who are not protected and nurtured by it (Pettigrew 1987; Zaleznik 1989). Nicholson cautions that "the practice of management is itself a component of culture. . . . Management cannot control culture for attempts to control cultural variables themselves constitute part of the culture" (1984, p.264).

Overzealous control of corporate culture has been cast as a form of social engineering. Cloning people in the organisational culture is morally questionable and likely to jeopardise the ethical robustness of the organisation in the longer term (Fitzgerald 1989). A highly cohesive culture can produce extreme actions in organisational members to preserve the organisation and its values against threat, as in the Karen Silkwood case (Schwartz 1987). Strong cultures develop habits of action with a life of their own and can impair the actor's capacity to make good judgments. Research on organisational socialisation raises the question: At what point does culture become propaganda and training become indoctrination? (Martin & Powers 1983). Corporate culture traffics in the intangible, the psychological and the personal. The effects on the individual may be profound while affording little conscious control over the process, apart from self-selection into the organisation.

This evidence is cited by the proponents of the subcultural approach to argue that good management begins with an understanding of the value differences of subcultures and the terrain of controversy (Gregory 1983). "To the extent that cultural management is to be successful rather than cosmetic or deceptive, it will have to comprehend comparative values and belief systems" (Reed & Anthony 1990). The subcul-

tural approach recognises that management itself is a subculture that "constructs and legitimizes managerial prerogatives in terms of a rational, goal-directed image of organizational effectiveness" (Gowler & Legge 1983, p.198). The broad contention is that subcultures cannot and should not be controlled by management. However, there is encouragement of efforts aimed at converting an antagonistic or "countercultural" subculture into an "enhancing" or "orthogonal" one, in which norms are congruent with organisational values (Martin & Siehl 1983). It is also argued that organisations can strive to maximise their cohesion around fundamental or overarching values, such as service or quality care, while enabling diversity and flexibility in the operational beliefs and norms of subcultures.

The professional-managerial multiculture

Professional values are often characterised as intransigent, resource-ignorant perspectives which undermine the overall organisational good and make managers' jobs difficult. Professionals, on the other hand, do not want to be managed. Professional values devalue managers' skills and their managerial mandate to curtail professional autonomy. The third model of culture recognises that public organisations are likely to be composed of subcultures of policy, service or professional groups and management or corporate-oriented groups (Kouzes & Mico 1983). In contrast to the subcultural model, this approach prescribes active management strategies and a cultural scenario which maximises the contribution of subcultures within the constraints of the organisation.

Some examples of this model take a managerial perspective, advising how to "manage" professionals. Others argue the need for professionals to become more skilled at "managing" their managers (Raelin 1986). There are several good reasons why professionals should not leave management to the managers. First, managers are becoming increasingly powerful and professional themselves. They have the capability to impact very substantially on the way professionals do their work.

Secondly, management is a career path that increasing numbers of professionals will follow.

Once professionals reach a certain level of seniority, management responsibilities are inevitable. Career success is increasingly measured according not just to professional excellence, but to management skills — how to get the best out of employees, how to live within the budget, how to ensure that what's delivered is high quality and matches customer needs. Research now persuasively disproves that good generalist managers readily and effectively manage any sort of organisation in any sector (Stewart 1976). Organisations need managers who understand the processes and clients but can also manage production and delivery.

Thirdly, a well-identified risk with professionals is their capacity to become insulated in their profession, remote from the needs of those they serve and exploitative of the power they are accorded (Fulcher 1989). Professionals need to be proactive in the face of such pressures, if they are not to be "managed" by the professional managers into positions where they believe their values and standards are intolerably compromised.

The professional-managerial multiculture model is based on the assumption that cultural diversity produces synergies and a greater potential for innovation (Adler 1986). To achieve such a multiculture there are several strategies in which both professionals and managers within an organisation can fruitfully participate:

1. Develop an understanding of value differences and common ground. The first step in developing this kind of culture is identification of the values which exist — the terrain of the "native" cultures. Research has identified the ways in which the values of professionals and managers typically diverge and this provides some clues to areas of cultural controversy (see accompanying table).

2. Build a common culture. Once values have been identified, areas of common commitment can be identified. These might be a commitment to particular goals such as quality service, a commitment to developing strong customer relationships or a well-respected community profile, or a commitment to "the means needed to reach these goals, and spell out when and where management might seek out professional participation" (Benveniste 1987, p.95).

A COMPARISON OF PROFESSIONAL AND MANAGERIAL VALUES

Professional Values	Managerial Values
Cosmopolitan i.e. primary identification to professional values	Locals i.e. primary identification to organisation
peer evaluation	objective performance measures
autonomy and discretion	supervision, control and planning
technical skills	management skills
expert power/status	power to get things done
quality of service	cost-effectiveness or efficiency
means	ends
ethical responsibility	corporate efficiency

[Source: Gouldner 1957, 1958; Benveniste 1987; Raelin 1986; White & Wooten 1986]

This provides an opportunity to re-examine definitions of professionalism. It has been suggested that concepts of status professionalism, which traditionally encourage professionals to identify with a professional body rather than their organisation, are being superseded by "organisational professionalism". Reed and Anthony (1990) argue that such re-examination may provide fertile areas of agreement between managers (undergoing professionalisation) and professionals in organisations.

When overarching values have been agreed, discussion can be focused on particular trade-offs. A common example is offering professionals autonomy in how certain outcomes are achieved but offering management control and coordination of the delivery of ends (Davis 1990). Alternatively, outcomes could be subject to professional judgment, with the means more closely controlled by management. Critical issues over which agreed values must be determined include the level of participation, trust and autonomy afforded and the level of monitoring and evaluation tolerated. Techniques of supervision and conflict resolution should also be agreed, as well as the nature and source of feedback. Once norms on management issues have been agreed, techniques such as mentorship, socialisation and "mediation

strategies" will facilitate their development and integration into the new organisational culture (Raelin 1986).

3. Development of structures and other systems. Structures of authority and division of labour should be consistent with the cultural values. This involves identifying areas of overlap or tasks which require both professional and managerial participation and institutionalisation in structures.

Benveniste (1987) identifies five structures or models of governance each of which are suited to different conditions: the professional partnership or collegial group where senior professionals retain managerial responsibilities, though they may contract out managerial tasks; the senior staff model where managerial responsibility is vested in a single manager who shares responsibilities with senior professionals; the dual governance model where two distinct hierarchies institutionalise professional and managerial responsibilities; the collegial model where all professionals participate equally in managerial tasks; and the bureaucratic model where management controls the professions by routinising their participation. The appropriate model will be partially determined by the importance and relevance of professional tasks to the organisational task.

Other structural tools which facilitate the development of a professional multiculture include linkage devices which can be formal or more informal gatherings of managers and professionals. Seminars by professionals attended by managers can be matched by strategic planning sessions presented by managers. Flexible promotion policies which rotate professionals into managerial positions and flexible career paths supported by training and information also facilitate a professional managerial multiculture.

Public interest or public service cultures

The public service culture assumes, like the cultural control model, that organisational culture is critical to performance and that a coherent unitary culture can be shaped, but it prescribes a different approach to cultural management. This model argues that public sector organisations need to grow their own

distinctive cultures, from the bottom up. Proponents of this approach recognise that the values of excellence prescribed by private sector organisations may not match the products, environment or "native" culture of existing employees in a public organisation. They argue that a cohesive culture can be developed which does "fit" and will produce better performance.

In a comparative study of American organisations, Gordon found that high performance, measured in financial terms, was correlated with quite different organisational values and cultures in the public and private sectors. High performing government utilities place a higher value on integration (horizontal interdependence), top management contact (vertical interdependence), perceptions of fair and competitive remuneration and opportunities for employee development. In contrast, the values of high performing private sector companies were consistent with Peters and Waterman's "principles of excellence" (1983), with a stronger emphasis on individual initiative and a "bias towards action" (Gordon 1985, p.111).

British research provides examples of public sector cultures where conflicting values of public service are explicitly traded as part of the articulation of culture. Ackroyd, Hughes and Soothill outline a practice of "custodial management" which enables professional practitioners to preserve the best aspects of their practice, "its decentralized and self-managed mode of delivery". They suggest this alternative management norm might enable some public sector organisations to escape the imposition of "market-related management practices ... incompatible with much established practice in the delivery of services" (Ackroyd, Hughes & Soothill 1989, p.616).

Similarly, Stewart and Clark outline a culture built around a "public service orientation". The central value of this culture is attention to customer views expressed through a determination to "seek them out", search for suggestions and give priority to complaints. There is a focus on welcoming access and ensuring service is delivered in a form and manner geared to customer needs. Though this borrows the "keep close to the customer" dictum celebrated in successful private organisations, Stewart and Clark modify the prescription.

Various definitions of "the customer" are recognised, as are "the conditions of service (which) are not determined by the resources available to the customer but subject to special conditions laid down by the political process" (1987, p.170). In such a culture, participation and accountability are predetermined values, but the way in which those values are advanced through particular means must be identified and weighted. Other values such as professionalism are treated not as core values but as norms which similarly should be weighted as means to ends of public service.

The public service culture model emphasises that each culture should respond to the distinctive challenges facing particular public sector organisations including political linkages, accountability, environmental responsibilities and industrial relations issues (Limerick *et al* 1984; Stewart & Clark 1987). The recommended techniques of culture-building are less management-driven and involve more careful specification of, and melding with, the existing values and ethics of employees. The resulting public service culture explicitly recognises debates in the traditional terrain of public administration concerning, for example, concepts of conflict and consensus, collectivism and individualism.

Conclusion

The public sector has a reputation for the retarded and indiscriminating embrace of management practices developed in, and for, the private sector. Though such practices are often touted as generic, there is increasing recognition from both the management community and the public administration community that prescriptions for good management are contingent on organisational circumstances and context. It is also recognised that, in this respect, public sector organisations are variably though intrinsically different to private organisations. Hence, prescriptions for the organisational culture of high performing public sector organisations *should* be different.

Some highly distinguished public administration writers have long recognised the importance of organisational culture (Weber 1947; Selznick 1959; Crozier 1964). Since their

efforts, sporadic attention has focused on bureaucratic culture as an obstacle to, not a tool for, change. Acknowledging the very sound arguments which caution against the manipulative and deceptive use of culture, neglect of its importance will not protect us from its misuse. Administrators need to look again at how, if at all, culture should be influenced, with the benefit of the considerable organisational and management research.

Political and economic pressures have produced dramatic change in the way government policy is administered or, more controversially, managed. With increasing attention on how to deliver more with less, the usual administrative reforms are being implemented: restructuring and rationalisation, financial accountability and management information systems, human resource management techniques such as performance appraisal, even codes of ethics. The focus of management improvements in Australia has been on structural, financial and planning techniques. Inevitably as part of these reforms, organisational culture is changing; traditional values, norms, rituals and symbols are being replaced. In some public organisations new leadership is actively attempting to change the culture — but change it to what?

Managerialism has spawned a *de facto* cultural formula of the cultural control kind, deriving from its "rational, output-oriented, plan-based and management-led view of organisational reform" (Sinclair 1989, p.383). Managerialism elevates the values of management and advocates a strong corporate commitment, albeit as a means to better service delivery. These values are translated into rituals, symbols and practices modelled by heroes who are heralded as manager-leaders rather than administrators. They are upheld by the stratum of purportedly generalist managers in the various senior executive services, who are rewarded for their management skills rather than technical expertise in relevant policy areas. The culture of managerialism subjugates the values of professionals, especially where they deviate from the management agenda, and a common cultural technique is to "outplace" or otherwise remove from positions of power employees who do not put managerially defined organisational values

first.

Particularly in those organisations experiencing various forms of privatisation, corporatisation and commercialisation, the cultural control model derived from the private sector is prevalent, if not explicit. Senior managers are promulgating a management-devised culture which seeks to unite employees around core beliefs of customer or quality service and elicit behavioural changes in employees' delivery of public goods and services which reflect those beliefs. There are many instances where this approach has been highly successful in delivering improved organisational performance.

However, this paper has argued that this approach is not appropriate to many public sector organisations, in which diversity of beliefs

is a basic value, and a level of conflict is not only inevitable but in many cases an asset to organisational responsiveness and flexibility (Sinclair & Marriott 1989). Some other models of organisational culture have been described which are guided by a different ideal of excellence and which demand different techniques of cultural change, including a distinctive role and profile for management and professionals. The employees of public sector organisations need to examine their cultures closely and devise ways of moving forward which do not sell out professional expertise or ethics and a commitment to public service but enable their organisations to flourish and perform well. The alternative models of organisation culture outlined will hopefully facilitate and inform this process.

NOTE:

1. There is a small amount of conflicting evidence: for example, Lachman (1985) found no differences in CEOs' perceptions of the influence of institutions in their environment.

REFERENCES:

- Ackroyd, S., Hughes, J. & Soothill, K. 1989. "Public Sector Services and their Management", *Journal of Management Studies*, 26(6).
- Adler, N. 1986. *International Dimensions of Organisational Behaviour*, Kent Publishing Co., Boston.
- Allison, G. 1980. "Public and Private Management: Are They Fundamentally Alike in all Unimportant Respects", in R. Stillman (ed), *Public Administration: Concepts and Cases* (4th ed.), Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Anthony, P. 1990. "The Paradox of the Management of Culture or 'He Who Leads is Lost'", *Personnel Review*, 19(4).
- Baum, H.S. 1987. *The Invisible Bureaucracy: the Unconscious in Organizational Problem-solving*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Benveniste, G. 1987. *Professionalizing the Organisation*, San Francisco, Jossey Bass.
- Beyer, J.M. 1981. "Ideologies, Values and Decision-making in Organizations", in P. Nystrom & W. Starbuck (eds), *Handbook of Organizational Design*, Vol. II, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Bourgeois, L. 1984. "Strategic Management and Determinism", *Academy of Management Review*, 9(4).
- Bozeman, B. 1987. *All Organizations are Public*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco.
- Buchanan, B. 1974. "Government Managers, Business Executives, and Organizational Commitment", *Public Administration Review*, 34(4).
- Cherniss, C. & Kane, J. 1987. "Public Sector Professionals: Job Characteristics, Satisfaction and Aspirations for Intrinsic Fulfillment through Work", *Human Relations*, 40(3).
- Crozier, M. 1964. *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, Tavistock, London.
- Davis, G. 1990. "The Politics of Traffic Lights: Professionals in Public Bureaucracy", *AJPA*, 49(1).
- Deal, T. & Kennedy, A. 1982. *Corporate Cultures*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts.
- Denison, D. 1990. *Corporate Culture and Organizational Effectiveness*, Wiley, New York.
- EZI (Egon Zehnder International) 1989. *Crossing Over: Experience and Perceptions of Executives from the Private Sector who have joined Government Organisations*, Melbourne.
- Fitzgerald, T. 1988. "Can Change in Organisational Culture Really be Managed?" *Organization Dynamics*, 17(2).
- Fulcher, G. 1989. *Disabling Policies? A Comparative Approach to Education Policy and Disability*, Falmer Press, London.
- Gagliardi, P. 1990. "Culture and Management Training: Closed Minds and Change in Managers Belonging to Organizational and Occupational Communities", in B. Turner (ed.), *Organizational Symbolism*, de Gruyter, Berlin.

- Gouldner, A. 1957, 1958. "Cosmopolitans and Locals: Towards an Analysis of Latent Social Roles — Pts I & II", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2(4) & 3(1).
- Gordon, G. 1985. "The Relationship of Corporate Culture to Industry Sector and Corporate Performance", in R. Kilmann, R. Saxton & M. Serpa (eds), *Gaining Control of the Corporate Culture*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco.
- Gowler, D. & Legge, K. 1983. "The Meaning of Management and the Management of Meaning: a View from Social Anthropology", in M. Earl (ed.), *Perspectives on Management: A Multidisciplinary Analysis*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Graham, A. 1989. "After Thatcher: Where Next?", Address, Melbourne.
- Gregory, L. 1983. "Native-View Paradigms: Multiple Cultures and Culture Conflicts in Organizations", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28(3).
- Handy, C. 1978. *Gods of Management*, London, Pan.
- Hofstede, G., Neuijen, B., Ohayv, D. & Sanders, G. 1990. "Measuring Organizational Cultures: A Qualitative and Quantitative Study across Twenty Cases", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35(2).
- Hood, C. & Dunsire, A. 1981. *Bureaucratics*, Gower, London.
- Hummel, R. 1982. *The Bureaucratic Experience* (2nd ed.), St. Martin's Press, New York.
- Kanter, R. 1984. *The Changemasters*, Counterpoint, New York.
- 1988. "When a Thousand Flowers Bloom", in B. Staw & L. Cummings (eds), *Research in Organizational Behaviour*, Vol. 10, JAI Press, Greenwich, Connecticut.
- Kaufman, H. 1976. *Are Government Organizations Immortal?*, Brookings Institution, Washington.
- Kelman, S. 1988. "Why Public Ideas Matter", in R. Reich (ed.), *The Power of Public Ideas*, Ballinger, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Kenny, G., Butler, R., Hickson, R., Cray, D. & Mallory, G. 1987. "Strategic Decision-Making: Influence Patterns in Public and Private Sector Organizations", *Human Relations*, 40(9).
- Kilmann, R.H. 1985. Introduction in R. Kilmann, M. Saxton & R. Serpa (eds), *Gaining Control of the Corporate Culture*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco.
- Kouzes, J. & Mico, P. 1979. "Domain Theory", *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 15(4).
- Lachman, R. 1985. "Public and Private Sector Differences: CEO's Perceptions of their Role Environments", *Academy of Management Journal*, 28(3).
- Limerick, D., Cunningham, B. & Trevor Roberts, B. 1984. *Frontiers of Excellence: A Study of Strategy, Structure and Culture in Fifty Australian Organisations*, Australian Institute of Management, Queensland Division, Spring Hill, Qld.
- Lorsch, J. 1985. "Strategic Myopia: Culture as an Invisible Barrier to Change", in R. Kilmann, M.J. Saxton, & R. Serpa (eds), *Gaining Control of the Corporate Culture*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco.
- McCall, M. 1988. "Leadership and the Professional", in R. Katz (ed.), *Managing Professionals in Innovative Organizations*, Ballinger, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Martin, J. & Siehl, C. 1983. "Organizational Culture and Counter-Culture: An Uneasy Symbiosis", *Organizational Dynamics*, Autumn.
- & Powers, M. 1983. "Truth or Corporate Propaganda: The Value of a Good War Story", in L. Pondy, P. Frost, G. Morgan & T. Dandridge (eds), *Organizational Symbolism*, Monographs in Organizational Behavior and Industrial Relations, JAI Press, Greenwich, Connecticut.
- Meyer, J. & Rowan, B. 1977. "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony", *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(2).
- Meyer, M. 1985. *Limits to Bureaucratic Growth*, de Gruyter, Berlin.
- Mintzberg, H. 1979. *The Structuring of Organizations*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.
- Nicholson, N. 1984. "Organisational Culture, Ideology and Management", in J. Hunt, D. Hosking, C. Schriesheim, & R. Stewart (eds), *Leaders and Managers*, Pergamon, New York.
- Ouchi, W. 1981. *Theory Z*, Addison Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts.
- Painter, M. 1987. *Steering the Modern State: Changes in Central Co-ordination in Three Australian State Governments*, Sydney University Press, Sydney.
- Perry, J. & Rainey, H. 1988. "The Public-Private Distinction in Organization Theory: A Critique and Research Strategy", *Academy of Management Review*, 13(2).
- Peters, T. & Waterman, R. 1982. *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies*, Harper & Row, New York.
- Pettigrew, A. 1987. "Context and Action in the Transformation of the Firm", *Journal of Management Studies*, 24(6).

- Pollitt, C. 1984. *Manipulating the Machine*, Allen & Unwin, London.
- Pondy, L. & Mitroff, I. 1979. "Beyond Open Systems Models of Organisation", in B. Staw (ed.), *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Vol.1, JAI Press, Greenwich, Connecticut.
- Raelin, J.A. 1986. *The Clash of Cultures: Managers and Professionals*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston.
- Rainey, H., Backoff, R. & Levine, C. 1976. "Comparing Public and Private Organizations", *Public Administration Review*, 36(2).
- Rawls, J., Ullrich, R. & Tivis Nelson, O. 1975. "A Comparison of Managers Entering or Re-entering the Profit and Non-Profit Sectors", *Academy of Management Journal*, 18(3).
- Reed, M. & Anthony, P. 1990. Professionalizing Management and Managing Professionalization: British Management in the 1980s, Paper presented to the Employment in the Enterprise Culture Conference, Cardiff Business School, Cardiff.
- Rose, R. 1988. "Organizations as Multiple Cultures: A Rules Theory Analysis", *Human Relations*, 41(2).
- Schwartz, H. 1987. "Anti-social Actions of Committed Organizational Participants: An Existential Psychoanalytic Perspective", *Organization Studies*, 8(4).
- Schein, E. 1983. "The Role of the Founder in Creating Organizational Culture", *Organization Dynamics*, Summer.
- 1984. "Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture", *Sloan Management Review*, 25(2).
- Selznick, P. 1957. *Leadership in Administration: A Sociological Interpretation*, Harper & Row, New York.
- Sinclair, A. 1989. "Public Sector Culture: Managerialism or Multiculturalism?", *AJPA*, 48(4).
- & Marriott, F. 1989. "Women in Management: Advantage through Diversity", *Asia Pacific Human Resource Management*, 28(2).
- Smircich, L. 1983. "Concepts of Culture and Organizational Analysis", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28(3).
- & Morgan, G. 1982. "Leadership: The Management of Meaning", *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 18(2).
- Stewart, J. & Clark, M. 1987. "The Public Service Orientation: Issues and Dilemmas", *Public Administration*, 65(2).
- Stewart, R. 1985. *The Reality of Management* (2nd ed.), Pan Books, London.
- Van Maanen, J. & Barley, S.R. 1984. "Occupational Communities: Culture Control in Organizations", in B. Staw (ed.), *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Vol.6, JAI Press, Greenwich, Connecticut.
- Wamsley, G. & Zald, M. 1973. *The Political Economy of Public Organizations*, Lexington Books, Lexington, Massachusetts.
- Weber, M. 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (trans. A. Henderson & T. Parsons), Oxford University Press, London.
- Weick, K. 1985. "The Significance of Corporate Culture", in P. Frost *et al* (eds), *Organizational Culture*, Sage, Beverly Hills.
- White, L.P. & Wooten, K.C. 1986. *Professional Ethics and Practice in Organizational Development*, Praeger, New York.
- Wilkins, A.L. & Ouchi, W. 1983. "Efficient Cultures: Exploring the Relationship between Culture and Organizational Performance", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28(3).
- Yaeger, S.J., Rabin, J. & Vocino, T. 1985. "Feedback and Administrative Behaviour in the Public Sector, *Public Administration Review*, 45(5).
- Zaleznik, A. 1989. "The Mythological Structure of Organizations and Its Impact", *Human Resource Management*, 28(2).