There and Back Again: A Sociological Case Study of HRM as a Force for Cultural Change in a Division of a Civil Service Department

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by

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Abstract

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The aim of this research was to ethnographically investigate the nature of cultural change in a civil service department. Practical literature around organisational change abounds in 'Business and Management Studies' while sociological research largely focuses on how organisational change effects or imposes a power dynamic that confines or exploits organisational workers. Ethnographic research remains uncommon in large-scale organisations and there exists still fewer in respect of the British civil service. This research was conducted over a period of fourteen months in a 'Division' of a large Government Department (the 'Department') and seeks to place the stories of civil servants centre stage in culturally understanding their experiences of organisational change.

Through immersion in the Department's culture data was drawn from across two research phases and through the stories and experiences of twenty-two research participants. Phase One involved extended periods of time spent with six 'key' participants from whom data was collected by means semi-structured interviews, periods of shadowing, observation and day-to-day conversation. The data collected then informed the basis of enquiry in Phase Two, in which a further eighteen 'peripheral' participants took part by means of semi-structured interviews and ad hoc conversation. In triangulating the data still further, the 'Department' afforded the researcher access to its intranet from which knowledge and understanding was gained through its publication of internal strategies and procedures.

As the data unfolded Human Resource Management (HRM) was identified as a key mechanism for effecting cultural change. From the Human Relations Approach of management, HRM gathered momentum during the 1980's and contemporarily informs the management system of most large organisations. Two models of HRM exist, a 'soft' model and a 'hard' model and, as a strategy effective implementation relies on the key characteristics of integration, commitment, flexibility and quality. The Department seeks to integrate its HRM strategy through a discourse of modernising government by means of a highly trained and professional workforce. This ethos is underpinned by a clear set of 'behaviours', which are subsequently embedded and integrated within the Department's performance pay and promotion system.

Thematically analysed the data revealed that HRM comes at the end of a long line of management initiatives. HRM's ethos is largely perceived as the 'latest fad' that somewhat patronisingly describes existing professionalism and negates an established culture of organisational commitment. However, while this would suggest a resistant workforce suffering 'initiative fatigue' there is evidence to suggest that despite this, the Department's HRM strategy does appear to have a 'drip drip' effect in effecting a change in organisational culture around its pursuit of modernising government.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that the work contained herein is my own.

For liberty.....

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Introduction

There and Back Again

The aim of this thesis is to consider the effect of Human Resource Management (HRM) as a force for cultural organisational change. Set in a division of a civil service department this study uses ethnography to investigate the effect of HRM through the everyday lived realities and experiences of civil servants. The motivation of this study was in essence personal. I am an ex-civil servant who during two periods of service from the mid 1970's to the early 1980's and then again from 1990 to the mid 1990's experienced extensive change. Frustratingly during this time as an Administrative Officer and later as an Executive Officer, I was often puzzled by what seemed like an ongoing programme of change that did not seem to be part of any wider 'joined-up' narrative.

During major cutbacks in the 1990's I opted for voluntary redundancy and yet, my frustrating experience of change in the civil service particularly through the 1990's, remained unresolved and finally culminated in this research. The objective of which was to unravel and intellectualise the civil service's ongoing project of reform and in the process, to accurately represent the thoughts and feelings of the civil servants who daily interpret, implement and negotiate civil service change through their everyday interactions and working activities. An interpretivist ethnography within a sociological framework provided the forum from which to do this.

Sociology and the Study of Organisations

A sociological approach to the study of organisations is best initially best summarised through Burrell and Morgan's (1979) four paradigmatic approaches. These approaches include functionalism, interpretivism, radical humanism and radical structuralism. Across these four paradigms interpretivism and radical humanism privilege subjectivity while functionalism and radical structuralism privilege objectivity. What this means then, is that the latter two focus on regulative and consensual order and, change through the gaze of structure while interpretivism and radical humanism consider the impact of these issues through the individual or groups of individuals in respect of their agency. Contemporarily Watson (2003) suggests an extended typology of six approaches; managerial-psychologistic; Durkheim-systems; Interactionist; Weber-social action; Marxian and, Discursive-post-modern.

Traditionally the driving force for the sociological study of organisations has been through a functionalist gaze with the objective of understanding conflict and order. However, Hassard (1993) calls for change and diversification in the way sociology approaches this field of study and while he looks to post-modernism in this respect, along with Morgan (1990) and Watson (2003), each call for approaches that potentially draw on multiple perspectives. To extend that still further requires an approach that embraces multi-disciplinarity. It seems of little use to sociologically study organisations in isolation without engaging with research and theory from other disciplines, which are equally interested in organisations.

This thesis draws on several of Watson's (2003) typology. Ethnographically it is predicated on interpretivism and seeks to understand how individuals construct and negotiate meaning in their everyday lives. However in order to do that it also draws heavily on discursive and post-modern influences. For example, at the heart of this research are the ways in which HRM is communicated and disseminated across the civil service. It is the discourse that civil servants hear and engage in which after all constructs their lived reality and helps them to make sense of their organisation and management strategy such as HRM. Finally, this research would be incomplete without the work of Weber (1947; 1949) in respect of social action theory and the principles that he determined underlie bureaucratic order in work organisations. As the focus for this study, the civil service is a unique organisation and culture to study. It is unique because its purpose is to serve the monarch, government, the public and importantly, be responsible for public monies. This is a complex arrangement that is based on tradition and hierarchical order and yet in contemporary society, it operates in quasi-businesslike environment where it is financially accountable alongside its efficiency, productivity and professionalism.

Although relatively humble in origin the advent of modernity saw the transformation and establishment of the traditional and permanent bureaucracy that we know today as the civil service. While it seeks to rise to the call of modernism and accountability it does so within a framework, which is firmly embedded in its tradition and culture. Its uniqueness as a hierarchical and bureaucratic structure has over the past one hundred and fifty years seen a persistent call for reform (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pyper, 1995). Weber's (1947) identification of an, 'iron cage of bureaucracy' seems to fit common perceptions of the civil service well. This makes the introduction of new management techniques such as HRM all the more difficult to implement. It is its longevity and standardised working practices that are its trademark and yet it is often these very practices that generate and sustain the ongoing call for civil service reform. In this respect then the civil service is unique not only in its size, longevity and structure but also within, its cultural format. Prime Minister Blair (1999:3) calls for action that will modernise government and he advocated that to that end, the Government seeks to create within the civil service 'a more innovative and less risk-adverse culture'.

Of course, one of the defining factors in this research is how organisational culture can be affected by a management strategy such as HRM. The problem is when we use the term, we do so interchangeably without fully understanding or agreeing on what culture is. Prime Minister Blair like many researchers and academics use the term liberally but definitions of what culture is actually made up become problematic. A general definition would include variables such as, beliefs, attitudes, values, anecdotes, heroes, jokes and so on (Brown, 1998; Collins, 1998; Martin, 1992; Schein, 1985). In this research the aim is to consider whether HRM can effect cultural change. However, it would be naïve to think that change and in particular, cultural change, could be established as standard across the various hierarchical levels of a civil service department. Necessarily sub-cultures exist and in particular in this research, the effects of HRM around cultural change were explored at a 'grass-root' level which was then contextualised at divisional and departmental levels.

Contemporarily, one of the driving forces in the civil service is its HRM strategy. Predicated on the Human Relations approach, which enjoyed popularity from the 1930's to the 1960's, the development of the Human Relations (HR) approach is largely attributed to Elton Mayo and Charles Barnard (Watson, 2003). The appeal of this approach is based on the assumption that workers are valuable resources rather than a collective body that is to be controlled through more traditional and instrumental approaches such as Taylorism (1947). According to Mabey, Salaman and Storey, (1998) its appeal lies in its ideological approach around managing values and viewing individuals as creative social actors. As such Collins (1998) suggests that HRM is an over-socialised model of change. In other words its focus appears to revolve around an organisation's personnel realising their potential not only in respect of their own satisfaction but strategically also to the good or betterment of an organisation. The theory being that if the workforce maximise their potential organisational change is likely to occur naturally as an evolving process. At odds then with Taylorism (1911), this approach looks beyond a prescriptive structure or culture that imposes a power dynamic but inclusively seeks to satisfy a workforce beyond simply monetary gain. Since the 1980's the HR approach and HRM has enjoyed renewed popularity and due to the influence of 'Japanisation', most large organisations adopt either a 'hard' or 'soft' HRM strategy. A 'hard' strategy tends to be linked with manufacturing industry and prescriptive productivity while a 'soft' strategy tends to be more 'touchy feely' which seeks to empower the worker as described above (Dickens, 1998).

The civil service is no exception in this instance and which model they adopt will be discussed at length in successive chapters but for now it is enough to say that at first glance the civil service generally appears to adopt a 'soft' strategy. The question is to what extent does HRM hold meaning for civil servants? HRM strategy is a mechanism for cultural change. However, changing the well-established culture of the civil service is no mean feat largely because of its size, longevity, tradition etc. This research investigates the ways in which HRM impacts on civil servants in respect of the internal policies of a civil service department and importantly, the extent to which the civil servants recognise its impact in shaping their working culture and lived realities. However, little research in the civil service has been conducted and still further in comparison to the wider business community, little in respect of HRM.

Research and the Civil Service

This summary is relatively brief because few studies have been conducted in the civil service from a bottom up perspective, that is one that engages with the workplace at grass roots level. Korvajarvi (1998) found that patriarchal gendered relations were reproduced in an employment office in Finland. She found that hierarchical gendering took place in the allocation of tasks, whereby women were assigned tasks that were essentially driven around nurturing and through the counselling of clients. Cunningham, Lord and Delaney (1999) in the UK similarly researched gender and issues of inequality with regard the Government's 'Next Steps' programme (an outline of the 'Next Steps' programme can be found in Chapter 3). They found that because of the fragmentation of semi-autonomous agencies and the more general processes of 'downsizing', opportunities for women in respect of promotion, flexible working and child-care provision were all hampered. They concluded that as organisational objectives took priority, equality of opportunity in the civil service had reached a critical point.

Foster and Hoggett (1999) investigated the Benefits Agency (BA) and the impact of 'New Public Management' (NPM) and found that attempts to de-bureaucratise the BA was problematic due to the high degree of standardisation necessary to process claims. They also reported that at that time the mechanistic way of working did not lend itself to HRM and that generally workers felt underpaid, had little opportunity around career development and subsequently workers were left unsupported by new systems of work and experienced a sense of injustice at their plight.

HRM Research and the Civil Service

> 'Responsive services are dependant on motivated staff. The thinking and values of staff are as crucial to transforming public service as are those of policy makers. Staff can engage with or sabotage transformation depending on their appraisal of the motives and reasons for change.
> (Maddock, 1998: www.netnexus.org/events/july98/talks/maddock.htm)

The above quote is drawn from a paper presented by Su Maddock of the Manchester Business School, in respect of the National Health Service. In this paper she calls for a 'people and process' approach that moves beyond traditional management approaches. She draws on Mackintosh, (1997) and calls for 'social settlement' that includes, structure, agency and value and to that end Maddock (1998) calls for the formation of collaborative partnerships where the NHS reach out into the community. Whether there are elements of civil service that could similarly reach out into the community is of course, debatable. However change in the civil service like the National Health Service does rely on its workforce to embrace change strategies.

Millar (2004) reported in 'Personnel Today', that 'HR was to play a pivotal role in reshaping the civil service'. The article in question highlighted that the HR community could celebrate the fact that they would be instrumental in bringing about civil service change. An initiative run out of the cabinet office, the announcement suggested that a new framework was to be developed that would contribute to establishing transformation in the public service. The implication of this announcement was that the civil service would enjoy a new approach to HR that was service wide.

The above article suggested that new approaches to HR would evolve new opportunities for civil service managers. Seifert and Tegg (1998) found in a review of management development in the British and Irish civil services that,

- 'gaps do exist between the espoused policies concerning management development and the operational management practices;
- line managers have engaged to some extent in the process of setting objectives with the managers they are responsible for but are failing to any great extent, to evaluate achievements in relation to these;
- middle managers do not appear to be getting the time to consider their development needs which may be one of many factors which account for their lack of confidence in strategic initiatives; and
- individual middle managers appear to place greater value on management development than their line manger' (1998:696).

This research is ongoing but shows a distinct gap between management policy and practice. Seifert and Tegg (1998) suggest that the new public management practice of importing private sector practices into the civil service has contextually created a mismatch between private and public sector management needs.

Literature related to HRM and the public sector largely derives from Australian sources. Brown (2004) comments that the distinction needs to be recognised that HRM in the private sector is, of course, linked with private interests, whereas in the public sector the focus remains firmly rooted in public interests. Brown, (2004:305) makes the point that this difference does not sit well in respect of HRM as a 'strategic partner in achieving organisational competitiveness and business outcomes'.

Of particular note, are Brown's (2004) comments that HRM has effected an erosion of public service pay, conditions and career development opportunities. Further, she looks to the processes of downsizing and contracting out as contributory factors in a decline in the standard of service delivery. Brown (2004) concludes that a distinction must be made between HRM as a private initiative and its application in the public sector and in particular its relation to new management practices.

In Australia, Waterhouse and Lewis (2004) conducted longitudinal research that investigated the implications of HRM in the public sector in respect of how culture change was communicated. Two of the key findings from this study were that workers in the 'Department of Main Roads' reported that they worked longer hours, which typically are indicative of a 'hero mentality' whereby long hours demonstrates worker commitment. They also reported that workers considered that the communication channels were such that they received too much information. Methodologically they make the point that strategies for change are predominately silent around the potential for bottom up approaches to change and further that few empirical studies have been conducted that consider transformation at the level of social action.

Filling in the Silences

This research aims to extend epistemology and go some way to breaching the silences that Waterhouse and Lewis (2004) identify in respect of bottom up approaches to change and transformation at the level of social action. As an ethnography, this research focuses on the voices and narratives of civil servants in a 'Division' of a large civil service 'Department'. However, it takes a triangulated approach and it seeks to contextualise these stories alongside the broader Departmental narrative around its policy, mission statement, aims, goals and so on. However, importantly the following summary will contextualise how this thesis sets out to fill in the silences.

Chapter Breakdown

In Chapter 1, *Sociology and the Study of Organisation*, literature from several directions and disciplines is drawn. This chapter opens by contextualising sociological approaches to the study of organisations. It then moves on to consider the origins of classical theorists and then progresses to contemporary management approaches and alongside briefly contextualises HRM. A brief overview of civil service research is introduced followed by research justification that advocates an ethnographic approach to understanding cultural life through lived experiences.

Chapter 2, *Methodological Discussion*, continues this theme through a methodological discussion which contextualises ethnography through its origins and its appropriation within interpretivist sociology and in particular the Chicago School. The chapter then moves on to discuss reflexivity through methodological concerns and practices. This chapter comprises of two sections and in Section Two, the study's methods are introduced and reflexively considered. The section covers issues around access, ethics, anonymity, sampling and the process of collecting and analysing data.

Chapter 3, *Step by Step: An Emerging Civil Service*, focuses on the civil service as an organisation. This chapter charts its historical origins from the days of 'grace and favour' through to the advent of modernity and the establishment of a permanent, organised and objective civil service. Throughout it contextualises the service as a focus for reform and finally in this respects it ends it journey with the persistent call for reform and consolidation by the current Labour Government. In conclusion the research site is introduced.

In Chapter 4, *A Force for Change...?*, the origins of the Human Relations approach are explored through the founding thought of Mayo and Barnard. Its waning popularity in comparison to other management approaches are discussed alongside its re-emergence in the 1980's in association with the influences of Japanisation. Both 'hard' and 'soft' models of HRM are introduced and discussed. Finally the, HRM strategy for the researched department is defined and the chapter concludes with data that highlights the views and understanding of the Department's civil servant.

Chapter 5, *Get with the Programme*, explores the extent to which civil servants engage with the ways in which the Department operationalises it behaviours through its internal policy processes, for example, performance related pay. Further, this chapter draws on data to consider the degree to which civil servant engage with commitment processes at a macro level by means of the work objective and through their perceptions of quality.

Chapter 6, *A Family Affair*, looks at the processes of cultural integration and it draws on notions of community and the metaphor of the family. Through ideas around the team or pseudo family, it explores social commitment and identification process that potentially engineer desired cultures. This chapter takes as its themes; teamwork, ritualistic behaviour and perceptions of value

Chapter 7, *There and Back Again,* thematically groups the key findings of the research and in conclusion suggests that HRM potentially influences civil servants more than they realise. An emergent discourse of professionalism demonstrates their level of commitment and flexibility to the organisation and despite 'initiative fatigue' the legacy of HRM has a 'drip drip' that slowly impacts on cultural change.

Chapter 1

Sociology and the Study of Organisations

The objective of this thesis is to consider the effect of Human Resource Management (HRM) as a force for cultural change in a division of a civil service department. As previously outlined in the introduction literature in this chapter will come from several directions and disciplines. Necessarily then a multi-disciplinary approach is taken that considers sociological and business and management approaches. This chapter then, will open first with a review of the sociological perspectives of organisational analysis. It will then consider the classical origins of organisation theory and progress to contemporary management approaches including HRM. A brief overview of civil service studies will be highlighted and the chapter will conclude by platforming research into organisational culture as a site for sociological analysis.

Sociology and Organisations

A sociological analysis of organisations immediately calls for the predominant paradigms to be identified. Each paradigm necessarily adopts different perspectives on which to focus and necessarily approaches the study of organisations through different methods (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Hassard and Pym, 1990; Morgan, 1990; Watson, 2003). Morgan (1990) points out that the diverse paradigms through which organisational analysis is approached can in itself be seen as threatening. Hassard

(1993) furthers this through the suggestion that the well-established nature and approaches to sociological analysis of organisations hampers the progression of innovative methodology. His suggestion is that the existence of these well-established approaches tends to inhibit a post-modern analysis and therein, the potential to sociologically take advantage of a multi-approach which does not rely on one paradigm but draws on several in understanding an organisations structure and its organisational behaviour. However, first we need to examine the usefulness of these approaches and our starting point is Burrell and Morgan (1979).

Burrell and Morgan's (1979) classic framework of sociological paradigms will then, be drawn upon in order to illustrate and contextualise the theoretical frameworks within which, sociological analysis operates. Burrell and Morgan (1979) distinguish two key debates that necessarily determine these paradigms, those of order versus conflict and, regulation versus radical change. In respect of order versus conflict Burrell and Morgan (1979) identify the key sociological themes as respectively revolving around stability, integration and consensus versus structural conflict and change. In respect of regulation versus radical change they identify the key sociological themes of explanations around unity and cohesion versus deprivation and potentiality (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The perspectives taken around these key debates, is a key indicator of the paradigmatic position assumed. They determine the four paradigms as 'Functionalist' and 'Radical Structuralist' which privilege objectivity and, 'Interpretive' and 'Radical Humanist' which privilege subjectivity (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Before outlining each of these individually and locating the research in this thesis, an illustration of Burrell and Morgan's (1979:22) framework is illustrated as follows,

Fig. 1

Burrell and Morgan: Four paradigms for the analysis of social theory.

The Sociology of Radical Change

	Radical Humanist	Radical Structuralist	
Subjective			Objective
	Interpretive	Functionalist	

The Sociology of Regulation

The most established and dominant of these paradigms in sociology's study of organisations is 'functionalism'. In approach it is objectivist, nomothetic, deterministic and positivist and, concerned with understanding regulation and control; it is predicated on the order and conflict debate (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Its concern is to understand society and therein, organisations as made up of socially interactive systems through which social order, integration and consensus operate and maintain the status quo. In organisational analysis its approach is problem orientated to which it seeks practical solutions. As such it engages with the process of social engineering as a means to affecting social change (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

In contrast to functionalism, the 'interpretive' paradigm privileges subjectivity, it is anti-positivist and ideographic in nature (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). However, like functionalism it assumes regulative order and it seeks to understand the nature of social order through the subjective experience. Its focus rests on the construction of meaning through social relations and chains of interaction (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). This paradigm focuses then, on understanding the social construction of organisational reality.

'Radical humanism' like interpretivism, privileges subjectivity, it is ideographic, anti-positivist and seeks social change. At its heart this approach is driven by concerns for human consciousness, which is perceived as dominated by ideological superstructures which prevent it realising its full potential (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). As such then it advocates emancipation and in this respect, it is anti-organisation because it perceives the organisation as responsible for confining and constraining human consciousness and potentiality through the social processes of alienation and false consciousness (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

Like radical humanism, 'radical structuralism' seeks radical change and pursues emancipation and human potentiality (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). However, unlike radical humanism it does not subjectively look to issues around consciousness but grounds the potential for radical change through conflict theory and a realist perspective of structures in the social world (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

The predominant and founding paradigm then for sociological analysis of organisations is functionalism and this paradigm has of course, generated extensive theory (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Morgan, 1990; Hassard and Pym, 1990). Through this paradigm, systems theory has been highly influential in driving industrial sociology around issues of social order, and conflict (Watson, 2003). However, despite assimilating influence from the German idealist tradition around interpretivism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) contemporarily it is criticised because of an over emphasis on structure at the expense of humans beings (Watson, 2003). In this respect Watson (2003:33) suggests,

> 'in making human individuals secondary or derivative of the social system in which they are located, systems approaches tend to pay insufficient attention to the degree of interplay which goes on between individual initiative and social constraint in human societies'.

While the functionalist and interpretivist paradigms share a boundary of focus in respect of 'regulation' in Burrell and Morgan's (1979) model, despite the early influences and contributions of theorists such as Weber (1947), Simmel (1978) and Mead (1934), the over-riding and dividing difference between the two paradigms are those of objectivity and subjectivity. While in the main functionalism seeks to understand social systems as objective entities in this respect it necessarily precludes the human element and privileges structure over agency (Watson, 2003).

The research in this thesis is predicated on the interpretive paradigm and its focus is in understanding the impact of HRM as a mechanism for cultural change and its potential to impact on the lived realities of civil servants. Interpretivism privileges the subjective and seeks to 'get inside' individual worldviews and although a triangulated approach is taken in this research, in that it looks at the civil service's structure from a top down perspective, its main concern is to understand the worldviews and responses to change of the civil servants in question. In origin, the interpretivist approach hails from the German 'Idealist' tradition and in sociology is predicated on hermeneutical understanding through the application of 'verstehen'

(Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Watson, 2003; Weber, 1949). This paradigm privileges the actions of the human actor as responsible for emergent patterns of social action and change (Mead, 1934, Goffman, 1959,1963,1974; Weber 1949). Popularised in sociology by the Chicago School, its methods are founded on Robert Park's principle of 'getting hands dirty' and in an organisational context on understanding negotiated orders (Strauss, 1963, Goffman 1959, 1961). In this context, interpretivists have focused on regulative order as organisationally negotiated and based on meaning ascribed through social interpretation, understanding and reaction of the social collective (Strauss, 1963, Goffman1959, 1961).

The interpretivistic methods employed by the Chicago School clearly focused then on regulative order and the meaning ascribed through this, however, as we have seen Burrell and Morgan (1979) identified four paradigms through which organisations can be understood but more contemporarily we perhaps need to extend this criteria to include for example, postmodernism. Watson (2003) identifies six strands of thought within the study of work and industry in sociology that embrace and extend Burrell and Morgan's work (1979). Watson's typology is as follows:

Fig. 2

Watson (2003:22) Six strands of thought in the sociology of work and industry.

Strand of thought	Application and development
Managerial-psychologistic	Scientific management (Taylorism) Psychological humanism
Durkheim-systems	Human relations Systems thinking in organisational analysis
Interactionist	Occupations and professions in society Organisations as negotiated orders Ethnomethodology
Weber-social action	Social action perspective on organisations Bureaucratic principles of work organisation Orientations to work
Marxian	Individual experiences and capitalist labour processes
Discursive	Discourse and human subjectivity Post-modern organisations

This model is useful because it demonstrates the diversity of approaches in organisational study and also the multiple ways in which various strands have developed and overlap. In some respects the field can be seen as problematic because its approaches seem fragmented (Hassard, 1993; Morgan, 1990; Reed, 1992; Watson, 2003). In many respects the way in which organisational research has been approached is of course, both time and context driven. In this respect approaches in the study of organisations across the various disciplines, for example, sociology, psychology, management and so on, reflect paradigmatic thought at that given time. Morgan (1990) suggests that organisational analysis is too caught up in problem solving and predicating research too rigidly within a particular paradigm at the cost of the phenomenon being studied. He suggests that instead the researcher needs to become crafted not only in the method of research but also to the different perspectives taken (Morgan, 1990). Morgan suggests that,

> 'In comparison with the attention given to methodology, the need for researchers to become familiar with the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon being studied is given relatively little attention. It is in this sense that there is a need for a greater sense of intellectual craftsmanship' (1990:27).

As Watson's model illustrates then, there is developmental overlap between the approaches taken in the study of organisations. Caught up in a traditional bureaucracy in a Weberian sense, the research 'gaze' in this thesis focuses on how HRM as a strategy for cultural change is interpreted and understood by a group of civil servants and, what its influence is in respect of a negotiated and regulative order. Drawing on Watson's model it is firmly rooted in the interpretivist strand, but necessarily it looks to the social action of civil servants who negotiate the organisation's regulative order. Further, HRM and bureaucracy both enter the equation and necessarily influence the social actors' negotiation of regulative order. However, to understand that regulative order and the way in which organisation and management theory has evolved, this chapter now turns to classical and founding thought.

The Classical Origins of Organisation Theory

In Chapter 3, Weber's ideas around corporate groups and bureaucracy are outlined in more detail and with reference to the civil service. However, here his contribution and observations around the emergence of increasingly complex hierarchical structures must be acknowledged as marking the onset of enquiry into the study of organisations and organisation theory (Hall, 1999; Hatch, 1997; Watson, 1995). Weber's interest in organised and bureaucratised society stems from the wider project of understanding the modernising effects of the Enlightenment. Entering 'modernity' saw the rapid acceleration of individualism, urbanisation, industrialisation, capitalism, societalisation and of course, bureaucratisation (Ritzer, 2000). For Weber, his interest lay in understanding the rationalisation and the social processes that legitimated authority (Hall, 1999; Senior, 2002; Thompson and McHugh, 2002;Weber, 1947). In respect of corporate groups, organisations and in particular, bureaucracy, Weber's, interest lay in the formal arrangements that underpinned hierarchal structures, which in turn, subsequently secured legitimised rational authority.

In defining an 'ideal type' of bureaucracy as a rule bound, formalised structure that held the potential for career development, Watson (2003:242) makes the point that Weber was not in the business of defining a model that 'ought' to be applied to administration but an analytic device from which to study administration. In essence then, Weber's observations were around understanding and chronicling his perceptions of the workings of bureaucratic administration and the power therein. In this respect then, his model lends itself toward a functional understanding of existing administrative processes. Through the gaze of rationality, Weber's work set out to understand the administrative processes of bureaucracy, but his model was subsequently highly influential in informing organisational analysis and design (Hall, 1999; Watson, 2003). In particular, organisational design that subsequently looked to maximise efficiency, value for money and importantly, that perpetuated capitalistic growth.

Rational Processing: Scientific Management

However, prior to Weber's publication of 'The Theory of Social and Economic Organization' in 1927 (trans., 1947) Frederick W. Taylor (1911) introduced his theory of 'Scientific Management' in the United States. The underpinning principle of this lay in applying rational scientific methods to the manufacturing process.
Taylor (1911; 1947:9) determined that,

> 'the principal object of management should be to secure the maximum prosperity for the employer coupled with the maximum prosperity for each employe(e)'.

The two rationalising principles that underpinned 'scientific management', were the use of experimentation to determine maximum performance in the most effective time and secondly, the division of labour between management and workers (Person, 1947; Taylor, (1911), 1947). Taylor 'did not believe that management could be learned from reading or (that it could be) taught in a classroom', he believed that 'it had to be learned in the doing' (Person, 1947:vi). In discriminating between management activities and tasks, management responsibility became clearly defined around planning, ensuring the availability of resources and importantly, through time and motion experiments which determined the most effective use of time in task performance. Taylor determined that the loss of 'maximum prosperity' (1911; 1947:9) was due to the process of 'soldiering', a social process whereby workers restrict their output through the deliberate loss of time. He suggested three reasons for this,

1. that misguidedly workers assumed that 'a material increase in the output of each man or each machine ……. would result ….in throwing a large number of men out of work',
2. that 'defective systems of management' force workers to act in such a way in order to protect their 'own best interests' and finally,
3. that the tried and tested 'rule of thumb methods' that were employed resulted in wasted time, effort and loss of manufacture (Taylor, (1911),1947:15-16).

'Scientific Management' then, principally relied on the managerial use of scientific methods to identify inefficiencies in production. Further it introduced the concept of 'piecework' and through the process of quantifying tasks secured management control of production (Hatch 1997). 'Scientific Management' exposed the self-protective processes engaged in by the workforce but also set the scene for management strategies that further enhanced the divide between the worker and the control of management (Hatch 1997). A piece-rate incentive, divided the workers in competition and the legacy of this first management strategy is evident in various guises in organisations today, e.g. through the contemporary use of performance pay. According to Burns (2000), Taylor believed that it was the unsystematic way in which managers operated that generated unrest and management mistrust within workforces.

He suggests that Taylor's work,

> "created a blueprint for, and legitimated, the activities of managers and their support staff. ....(this) created the plethora of functions and departments which characterise many modern organisations" (Burns, 2000:35).

The key motive in maximising efficiency under Taylorism then, is to remove control from the workforce and in this regard Taylor systematically advocated that management ensure that workers 'lay down' their knowledge. He suggested that,

> "managers assume...... the burden of gathering together all the traditional knowledge which in the past has been possessed by the workman and then of classifying, tabulating and reducing this knowledge to rules, laws and formulae" which in turn would be 'immensely helpful to the workmen in doing their daily work', (Taylor, (1911), 1947:36).

The outcome of developing management as a 'science' then determined clear boundaries that distinguished between roles and task responsibility, resulting in more efficient use of time, maximum production and maximum prosperity for both management and workers. However, this strategy of extracting specialist or craftsmanship knowledge rendered the workforce less powerful. This process of deskilling exerted management control which Weber (1947) identified as legitimised rational legal authority.

The introduction of 'Scientific Management' (Taylorism) lays an important foundation stone in organisation theory for several reasons. Noon and Blyton, (1997) make the point that from Taylorism emerged as a distinct managerial ideology. They identify four key themes that emanate from this ideological framework,

1. 'the division of manual and mental labour; the separation of those who 'do' from those who 'think''
2. the emphasised importance of managerial status and the requisite skills necessary to this role and more broadly to ensuring the organisation's effectiveness
3. the legitimated use and expectation around task surveillance and monitoring
4. and finally, the belief that productivity is determined by workers' instrumental need for extrinsic reward (Noon & Blyton, 1997:101-102).

Noon and Blyton's (1997) framework not only highlights the demarcation of roles and skills typical of so many hierarchical organisations, but further, it also clearly denotes the process of rationalisation that Weber (1949) later identified as legitimating rational authority, as scientific. As an emerging and distinct managerial ideology then, Taylorism paved the way in establishing a tradition of management strategies that would seek to not only maximise production, profit etc but would also drive management theorists in the never ending pursuit of change. In many respects then, this highlights Weber's (1949) point that the legitimising effect of rationality subsequently begets more rationality and authority in this respect becomes a cyclic process.

Leading from the Top - Fayolism

However, while Taylor's focus was on manufacturing processes, eight years later in France, following his success in reversing the fortunes of an ailing mining company Henri Fayol wrote on the implementation of an 'effective' administration system (Burnes, 2000; Hatch 1997). If Taylorism streamlined the production floor then, Fayolism streamlined management structures and these two theories compliment each other in this respect (Burnes, 2000). Although at the time, Fayol's work was misguidedly accused of being in direct competition with 'Scientific Management' (Urwick, 1947). Fayol concurred with Taylor that essentially economic success was determined through the management of an organisation's personnel (Urwick, 1947).

While Taylor concentrated on a 'bottom-up' approach through the development of efficient manufacturing practices, Fayol focused on a 'top-down' approach that cascaded through the layers of hierarchical administration (Burnes, 2000; Urwick, 1947). Fayol proposed fourteen principles of management,

Fig. 3

Fayol (1947:19-20) Fourteen Principles of Management

1. Division of Work	8. Centralisation
2. Authority	9. Scalar chain (line of authority)
3. Discipline	10. Order
4. Unity of command	11. Equity
5. Unity of direction	12. Stability of tenure of personnel
6. Subordination of individual interest to the general interest	13. Initiative
7. Remuneration	14. Esprit de corps.

(Criteria for these principles can be found at Appendix 1)

Fayol attributed his managerial success to these principles rather than his personal ability and determined that these principles fell across five main managerial duties; planning, organising, command, co-ordination and control (Burnes, 2000; Fayol, 1949; Hatch, 1997). He advocated then, managerial consistency and success predicated on the above principles and managerial duties. Key to optimising managerial success Fayol believed that managers should be well educated and informed (Burnes, 2000; Fayol, 1949; Hatch, 1997). He assumed that managers of large French organisations shared his educational background and experience and similarly worked to these principles (Hatch, 1997; Fayol 1949). Burnes (2000:43) makes the point that Fayol believed that a universal system of management and administration were achievable but unlike Taylor, he 'did not generally try to impose his ideas directly on individual organisations'. Instead he looked to influence managers through education and in particular, through the promotion of good management training (Burnes, 2000; Fayol, 1949; Hatch, 1997; Thomson & McHugh, 2002).

Burnes (2000:44) makes the point that there is an 'affinity' between Weber's work and that of Fayol. He thinks, Fayol was unlikely to be aware of Weber's work although whether the same is true of Weber is less certain (Burnes, 2000). The difference between Fayol and Weber is that, Weber was never a practicing manager and his interest lay more in the historical legacies of power and how these became the rationalising force that legitimated Western bureaucracy. Through the medium of rational-legal authority, Weber's concern was to understand the influence of power in hierarchical structures and its subsequent effect on social actors therein. Burnes

(2002:43) determines Fayol as one of the 'pioneers of management theory and (that) many of his principles are still taught and practised today' albeit that he determines that 'he was writing for a receptive audience' who valued management practice and ideas as 'international currency'.

However, the same can obviously be said for all three writers. Each of these theorists, i.e. Weber (1949), Taylor (1911) and Fayol (1949), have undoubtedly had a founding impact on organisation theory and contemporary management strategy. Each illustrates that the trend for managing change has been ongoing over a considerable period and as Weber (1949) determined, has to be historically located alongside wider social change. What these theories illustrate is that in formulation they represent a sociological and managerial response to social change. The legacy of this founding thought continues to inform the managerial approaches and strategies that have since followed. The relevance and impact of these theories in respect of the civil service and administrative civil reform will later be contextualised but for now this founding thought is juxtaposed with the contemporary pursuit of cultural change in organisations.

Contemporary Approaches to Management

Effectively then, as a response to wider societal change, the rapid growth and spread of industry and capitalism, necessitated a swift response in respect of both organisational analysis and management theories such as, 'Scientific Management' and 'Fayolism'. As manufacturing industry passed through the era of 'Fordism' into 'Post-Fordism', contemporarily our economy is now largely based on a service and knowledge economy (Burnes, 2000; Thompson and McHugh, 2002, Watson, 2003). The project of change both at a societal and organisational level is ongoing and so too, is the need to develop management strategies and tech niques that can maximise growth and efficiency in these new service growth areas (Collins, 1998; Watson, 2003).

Collins (1998) makes the point that the one of difficulties in trying to tie down management frameworks is that they tend to be represented on a sequential and evolutionary trajectory. That is, one approach leads to another, to another and so on. Typical of this, Mullins (2002:71) follows this format and he refers to management approaches as on a 'four-fold framework of classical, human relations, systems and contingency approaches'. However he does concede that this framework is far from exhaustive and other approaches such as 'decision-making' and 'social action' might also be included. Meanwhile the point Collins (1998) makes is further emphasised by Thompson and McHugh (2002), who plot the classical approach and the human relations approach before going on to introduce the variation of 'closed systems' and 'open systems' approaches, with the latter extending through to the 'contingency' approach. Mullins (2002:73) makes the point that within the four-fold framework there exists what he refers to, as 'sub-divisions' of an approach and that potentially this means that the four-fold framework could theoretically, be extended to a nine or even ten-fold classification framework.

One of the problems that Collins (1998:ix) identifies is that the field of management and change is 'surprisingly non-theoretical' and as a consequence his critique is that both managers and students engage little in theoretical discussion or empirical research but are guided through exercises that result in them 'trading truisms and banalities' at a practical level. In this respect then, the founding thought of classical theorists such as Weber (1947), Taylor (1911) and Fayol (1911) is bypassed by the need for practical technique and application. As Collins (1998) identifies then, the lack of theoretical knowledge is in turn, through no fault of their own, perpetuated by students and prospective managers who go on to further this distinct style of management. Reviewing the literature in this field from a sociological perspective was problematic because as a field of study, management approaches did indeed, seem evolutionary as Collins (1998), had suggested. However, the perceived evolutionary pathway beyond the contingency approach seemed to give way to organisational behaviour and development and, management strategies that focused on practical application, such as, 'Total Quality Management' (TQM), 'Team-working', 'Empowerment' and so on. From the 1980's onwards then, the literature becomes fragmented and in its diversity seems to render it a victim of post-modernity. This makes it difficult if outside the field to discern which approach in this apparent sequential model is in vogue at the present time. The focus for this thesis is concerned with HRM as a strategy and its influence on effecting cultural change in the civil service and in this respect, the HR approach along with 'soft' and 'hard' models of HRM will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. However, HRM as a strategy seems to be comprised of various elements of management from the 1980's and in this respect a brief overview of what Collins identifies as management 'gurus' will follow. This is particularly pertinent because as Chapter 3 and the data will reveal, the civil service has experienced a long line of reform and, management strategies and initiatives that have impacted on the way in which HRM as a strategy is embraced.

Let's look East

The economic boom of the 1960's began its ebb in the 1970's and by the 1980's, rising unemployment and increased competition from the highly competitive Japanese market brought home the need for new management theories that could rise to this competition (Burnes, 2000; Collins, 1998; Mullins, 2002; Thompson and McHugh, 2002; Watson, 2003). As manufacturing industry continued its decline, Thompson and McHugh, (2002:91) point out that 'the key words for the future are variety, flexibility and customisation'. Drawing on the work of Perez (1983) and Freeman (1988) Burnes (2000:91) identifies three key features that were to drive the emergence of a 'new techno-economic rationale'. The key features that they outline are,

1. 'A shift towards information-intensive rather than energy - or materials – intensive products
2. A change from dedicated mass production systems towards more flexible systems that can accommodate a wider range of products, smaller batches and more frequent design changes – 'economies of scale' are being replaced by 'economies of scope'
3. A move towards the greater integration of processes and systems within companies and between suppliers and customers, which permit a more rapid response to market and customer requirements' (Burnes. 2000:91).

The drive for management theory that could meet the call for a 'new techno-economic rationale' led, according to Burnes (2000:91) to the emergence of three new approaches; 'the Culture-Excellence Approach, the Japanese Management Approach and the Organisational Learning Approach'. This is an era that according to Collins (1998) and Huczynski (1993) saw the rise of the management 'guru', so named because of their rapid response to the call for a new rationale. Collins, in defining this new breed of highly commercial consultants or management 'gurus' suggests that, they represent,

> 'an eclectic mixture of models apparently long discarded. For example, all the main gurus take as their departure point the idea that the basis of competition has been altered quite fundamentally, by shifts in technology and by changes in the international pecking order of competition. They tend to argue, therefore, that managers must alter their management control systems to meet these new challenges' (1998:21).

A full review of these 'gurus' and their respective approaches is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the three approaches identified by Burnes (2000) will be briefly outlined because affirming Collins's (1998:21) point around their 'eclectic mixture', in composition, elements from each of the approaches are visible through the strategies and initiatives employed in the researched civil service department.

The Culture-Excellence Approach

The 'Culture-Excellence' Approach is based on the theories of various management consultants and academics for example, Peters and Waterman (1982) and Kanter (1985), respectively (Burnes, 2000; Collins, 1998). Peters and Waterman (1982) propose that in 'excellent' companies, managers and employees break away from the rationality of traditional organisations (Burnes, 2000). They suggest that traditional analytic tools are no 'substitute for human judgement' and instead they advocate that managers and employees are given a creative licence and freedom that will allow them to try different ways of working and managing (Burnes, 2000:94). For example, this approach pursues innovation through the use of 'teams' and identifies eight key attributes in order to demonstrate excellence (Burnes, 2000; Collins, 1998). The attributes are as follows,

1. A bias for action
2. Close to the customer
3. Autonomy and entrepreneurship
4. Productivity through people
5. Hands-on, value-driven
6. Stick to the knitting
7. Simple form, lean staff
8. Simultaneous loose-tight properties

A breakdown taken from Collins (1998) for each of these criteria can be found at Appendix 2. However essentially, this approach places great emphasis on staff as a valuable commodity or asset who work, together in small units or teams and who are acutely aware of the needs of their customers (Burnes, 2000; Collins, 1998). Excellent companies tend to be managed by 'leaders', the staffing is 'lean' and made up of informed and committed staff who are materially rewarded for their loyalty (Burnes, 2000; Collins, 1998).

Clearly an obvious criticism of this approach is that it assumes a somewhat utopian environment whereby managers have autonomy to creatively innovate and flourish. Socially a changing environment calls that into question, in that the business environment and therein, management theory does not stand still and potentially then, can it be assumed that the attributes of an excellent company in the 1980's may necessarily apply in successive years. In many respects this theory, seems more like a 'tool box' for managing in an ideal world or at least a world where nothing stands still. In its formulaic approach it is reminiscent of what Collins (1998: 82) refers to as an, 'n-step guide for change'. Burnes (2000) makes the point that in later work Peters has extended the eight attributes of 'excellent companies' to fifteen attributes of 'how to stay great' within an innovative circle. According to Burnes (2000:100)

> 'trying to follow Peters' train of thought through his various books is like trying to catch mist – when you think you have got it, it slips through your hands'

and in this respect, he reports that Peters takes pride in his reputation for 'inconsistency'. This seems to add weight still further, to Collins' (1998:82) point around 'n-step guides' as quick fix solutions. Indeed in this respect, sociologically such guides appear to fulfil a greedy consumerist demand that relies on the eclectic characteristics of post-modernism.

Japanese Management

Defining Japanese management predictably is no easy matter. Burnes (2000) suggests that its component parts may be broken into two categories. He defines these as 'personnel/industrial relations issues and those relating to business manufacturing processes' (2000:125). Japanese management predictably assumes a 'holistic' approach that mirrors the values of Japanese culture and tradition (Burnes, 2000; Mullins, 2002; Watson, 2003). Mullins (2002:80) suggests that the influences of Japanese management can be summarised as,

1. Participative decision making
2. Bottom-up management
3. Lifetime employment
4. Amae-dependency relationships
5. Lean production.

Mullins (2002) in unpacking these categories explains that Japanese ways of working rely on group or 'team' working and indeed, the categories do indicate an inter-dependency that would further progress social processes around loyalty, commitment, cohesion and solidarity. In application both Mullins (2002) and Burnes (2000) highlight practical approaches taken in respect of worker welfare. Burnes (2000) refers to this as 'company welfarism' through which companies assume responsibility for, medical, educational and housing costs. He highlights the point that in some larger companies, the welfare support is so extensive that they resemble 'mini welfare states' (2000:127). In this respect great emphasis is placed on a well-trained workforce and worker development is encouraged as a long-term project. The benefits are a trained and skilled workforce who will subsequently reap rewards for an organisation through enhanced performance (Mullins, 2002; Burnes, 2000; Watson, 2003).

Linked with performance is the Japanese ideal around quality and their appropriation and development of 'Total Quality Management' (TQM) (Burnes, 2000; Mullins, 2002, Watson, 2003). Although originally the seeds of TQM can be traced to American engineers in the Second World War, Japanese management cultivated these into the contemporary strategy applied today (Morgan and Murgatroyd, 1994). In the Japanese model, TQM again relies on solid teamwork and group loyalty and provides space where workers are encouraged to be creative and actively participate in sharing their ideas around quality enhancement (Burnes, 2000; Morgan and Murgatroyd,1994; Mullins, 2002, Watson, 2003).

The holistic Japanese approach to management then, theoretically creates a tight framework, which interactively feeds on itself through the effective practice of worker social relations and solidarity. These collective working relations engage in purposeful and committed group activity, which creatively pursue the timely and quality delivery of an organisation's objectives. The concept of 'Japanisation' will be discussed later in Chapter 4, in respect of the Human Relations approach and HRM as a strategy.

Learning and Organisations

This approach brings further disarray into the frame. Defining this approach is highly problematic because as Burnes points out, theory in this area comes from many directions, for example, psychology, sociology, organisation theory, social anthropology and so on (2000:136). What learning is being referred to is nefarious. Burnes makes the point that the learning organisation is interchangeably used alongside organisational learning. Potentially it might refer to an organisation that sets out to learn and develop a strong knowledge framework around the market and, or, its competitors; or knowledge that improves an organisation's internal processes; or changes an organisation's ethos and culture; or it might refer to changing worker behaviours or developing their individual growth.

Numerous models exist to add to the confusion and it is not the intention of this thesis to specifically research the knowledge organisation per se. However, it is worthy of note in this chapter because in the researched site prevalent discourses draw heavily on emphasising personal growth and development and also, lay great store in civil servants keeping up to date with knowledge around the Department and its activities etc. It does of course, impact on changing cultural knowledge but in this respect this chapter will turn to literature specifically on cultural change in organisations.

However, before moving on, the three relatively new approaches that have been outlined illustrate that organisations seek change from many directions and at different levels. The point is that wider socio economic and political change has necessitated organisations to seek news ways of managing and the predominant legacy of this is the drive for organisations to become leaner, fitter and flexible in approach (Burnes, 2000; Collins, 1998; Mullins, 2002; Thompson and McHugh, 2002; Watson, 2003). Across the three outlined approaches there is a distinct overlapping of ideas to that end and many of the strands within these approaches are evident in HRM strategy. Of course the approach, management style and strategy taken is also co-dependent on the type of organisation and within, its culture. Extensive literature is generated within the discipline of business and management on organisational change but actually defining what is meant by organisational culture becomes problematic.

Defining Organisational Culture

Martin (1992) makes the point that research into organisational culture is not only interdisciplinary but as a concept is muddied still further by a multiple interpretation of what is meant by organisational culture. She points out that this in turn is further complicated by the various approaches and methods by which organisations are researched. If we take 'culture' per se as a concept, sociologically, we would suggest it is the social associations made across and throughout society in respect of patterned behaviour and rituals through which we attach value and construct meaning around individual, group and societal agency (Chaney, 2002; Fowler, 1997).

From a business perspective Capon (2004) suggests that we understand what is meant by culture at a national level and from this we then extend our worldview through cross-cultural comparison and through recognition and acknowledgement of global culture. She suggests that it is within the context of this solid external framework that we learn to contextualise local community differences and through this process we subsequently identify our locale and locate ourselves physically. In an organisational context Capon (2004) makes the point that organisational culture is established through its relationship with its external environment and through its structure or the type of people who it employs.

However, as Senior (2002) points out there is considerable overlap between the definitions of organisational culture in organisation and management studies. She draws on the analogy of the organisation as an iceberg; some elements of a culture remain visible while the majority lay beneath the surface (Senior, 2002). Brown (1998) determines that some definitions of organisational culture refer to the organisation as an objective entity conceptualised as a whole and driven by cognitive and, or, behavioural characteristics.

Characteristics of organisational culture can include then, its values, symbols, norms, ceremonies (Capon, 2004); its formal rules and procedures, informal behavioural codes, pay and promotion systems, jargon, jokes and narratives (Martin, 1992). As this list illustrates an organisation's culture can then, be influenced by many characteristics. Drennan (1992) identifies the following twelve key causal factors that shape an organisation's culture:

1. 'Influence of a dominant leader

2. Company history and tradition
3. Technology, products and services
4. The industry and its competition
5. Customers
6. Company expectations
7. Information and control systems
8. Legislation and company environment
9. Procedures and policies
10. Rewards systems and measurement
11. Organisation and resources
12. Goals, values and beliefs' (cited in Brown, 1998:42).

Not surprisingly then, defining culture is difficult. With such a substantial list of characteristics and defining sources it is easy to see why organisational culture can mean different things to different disciplines and therein, different researchers. In respect of this research Drennan's (1992) cultural sources prove useful because civil service culture is unique.

First of all it is a non-profit making organisation but that does not preclude it in contemporary society from organisational expectations that fit in with commerce more generally. For example, the civil service as Chapter 4 will later illustrate has a history of ongoing reform, which today looks for it to be comparable in a business environment in respect of professionalism, efficiency, value for money and so on. There is then, a drive around modernisation but at the same time it is a culture that is steeped in history and embedded in bureaucratic procedures and tradition. The uniqueness of the civil service's culture will be explored in much more depth in successive chapters but for now it is enough to say that the roots of its culture are widespread and diverse and it is this very uniqueness that makes it such an interesting research site for cultural change.

Alternatively, drawing on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) linguistic and philosophic ideas around the use of metaphor, Morgan (1997) highlights the point that traditionally organisations and organisational culture have been understood through the use of metaphor. Morgan (1997:13) suggests that classical thought on the management of organisations determined the rise of bureaucracy as a mechanised process, that is, one that was founded on the basis of social order and 'orderly relations' and operating within the assumed rigidity of a fully automated and efficient machine. With the rapid rise of industrialisation and a new reliance on mechanisation it is little wonder that instrumental thought turned to this new technology as a way of metaphorically ordering the economy, the division of labour and administration (Morgan 1997).

A clear sociological example of this is Durkheim's (1984) reference to society as an organism reliant on its moral fibre for nourishment and sustained through well-ordered and cohesive relations. This draws functionally on both biological and mechanistic metaphors symbolic of the time. This notion of mechanical ordering is also clearly visible in the hierarchical arrangements of bureaucracy determined by Weber (1947). Morgan (1997) draws on various examples to highlight how academic thought has been driven by organisational metaphor. For example, perhaps most pertinent to sociology is the organisation as a political system from which to analyse interest, conflict and power (Morgan 1997). The use of such metaphor has then, been instrumental in driving shifts in organisational and managerial perspectives and the strategies therein. Morgan (1997) determines the culture of organisations as a way of understanding the construction of social reality. Both Durkheim (1984) and Weber's (1947) theories around social order, mechanisation and bureaucracy respectively are epitomised by the civil service with its traditional systems and culture that are predicated on order, consensus and in essence subservience. Bearing this in mind civil service culture as a metaphor as the data will later refer, draws heavily on the use of metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Morgan, 1997) around it being an organisation that is likened to a 'machine', 'clerical factory' and internally, and somewhat affectionately, as a family.

Each of these will be explored further in subsequent chapters but it is easy to see that defining culture is problematic on various levels. When this chapter opened sociological paradigms were explored that located research across the dimensions of radical change versus regulation and around the subjective versus the objective and therein, the standpoints of functionalism and interpretivism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Clearly the standpoint assumed affects the data collected and its analysis. Traditionally in sociology an organisation's structure has been a focus of interest more than the agency of those working within and making up its culture.

From a business perspective Martin (1992) echoes Collins' concern (1998) that too much research in the business studies environment is ill thought through around its methodology and is lacking in a theoretical framework. Martin (1992) identifies that in studying organisational culture three perspectives are taken. These respectively are the integration, differentiation and fragmentation perspectives. To highlight the problem of defining organisational culture it is useful to briefly summarising these different perspectives to illustrate how research and importantly, the analysis of research is difficult.

The 'integration perspective' assumes a homogenous whole; a shared environment cohered by a social glue that informs social order, consensus and harmony (Martin, 1992). This perspective seeks clarity that from a 'top-down' approach informs and aids management strategy often with the objective to enhance productivity and increase profit. Essentially then, this approach falls sociologically into a functionalist perspective that seeks to affirm social and regulative order (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Martin, 1992).

The 'differentiation perspective' as the name implies looks for difference usually through dichotomous relationships. This perspective sets out to unmask the power dynamics within an organisation by exposing its inconsistencies and it does this by studying the sub-cultures of an organisation (Martin, 1992). Through studying an organisation's sub-cultures consistency across an organisation is questioned and although harmony may well prevail across different sub-culture so too, may contradiction and conflict. It is the underlying power dynamics of such difference that are of interest to this perspective. Traditionally, 'sameness' from an integration perspective is sought to maintain an organisation's equilibrium and often its management strategy, these are referred to as 'higher level' integrative concerns that go on to perpetuate or found 'universalistic' codes or norms (Martin, 1992). If this is likened to Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociological framework then its concerns of difference would locate it around radical change and perhaps predictably concerns of difference have a tendency to be relegated to a 'lower level' which hold the potential to be problematic and therefore, of less immediate importance to management strategy.

The last of these three perspectives is that of fragmentation.
In opposition to the integration perspective it privileges ambiguity and it is through this ambiguity that an organisation's culture or absence of culture, can be fully understood (Martin, 1992). This is a paradoxical approach that seeks to reveal an organisation's culture through the tensions in an organisation. Unlike the differentiation approach, the fragmentation approach does set out to expose binary oppositions but instead recognises and embraces the fluidity of culture (Martin, 1992). This approach sits less comfortably with Burrell and Morgan's (1979) framework but instead clearly echoes a post-modern approach that does not seek to reconcile or expose difference for any purposive change but simply to embrace ambiguity, fragmentation in explaining the fluidity of, in this case, an organisation's culture.

Martin's (1992) three perspectives draw an interesting parallel with sociological theoretical frameworks and help extend Burrell and Morgan's (1979) model and Watson's (2003) 'six strands of sociological thought', which take no account or, in the latter case, little account of the impact on post-modernism on contemporary society and organisational research. Martin's (1992) is useful in this respect because it helps address the problems of research that Hassard and Pym (1990) and Hassard (1993) identify as potentially holding back organisational research. However, these frameworks, or the lack of them (Martin, 1992; Collins, 1998), have nevertheless informed extensive models of organisational culture and gone on to inform various models of organisational change. It is therefore to the former that this chapter now turns in order to take a look at typically how culture is defined and explained through various models and what that means in terms of changing an organisation's culture.

Locating Organisational Culture

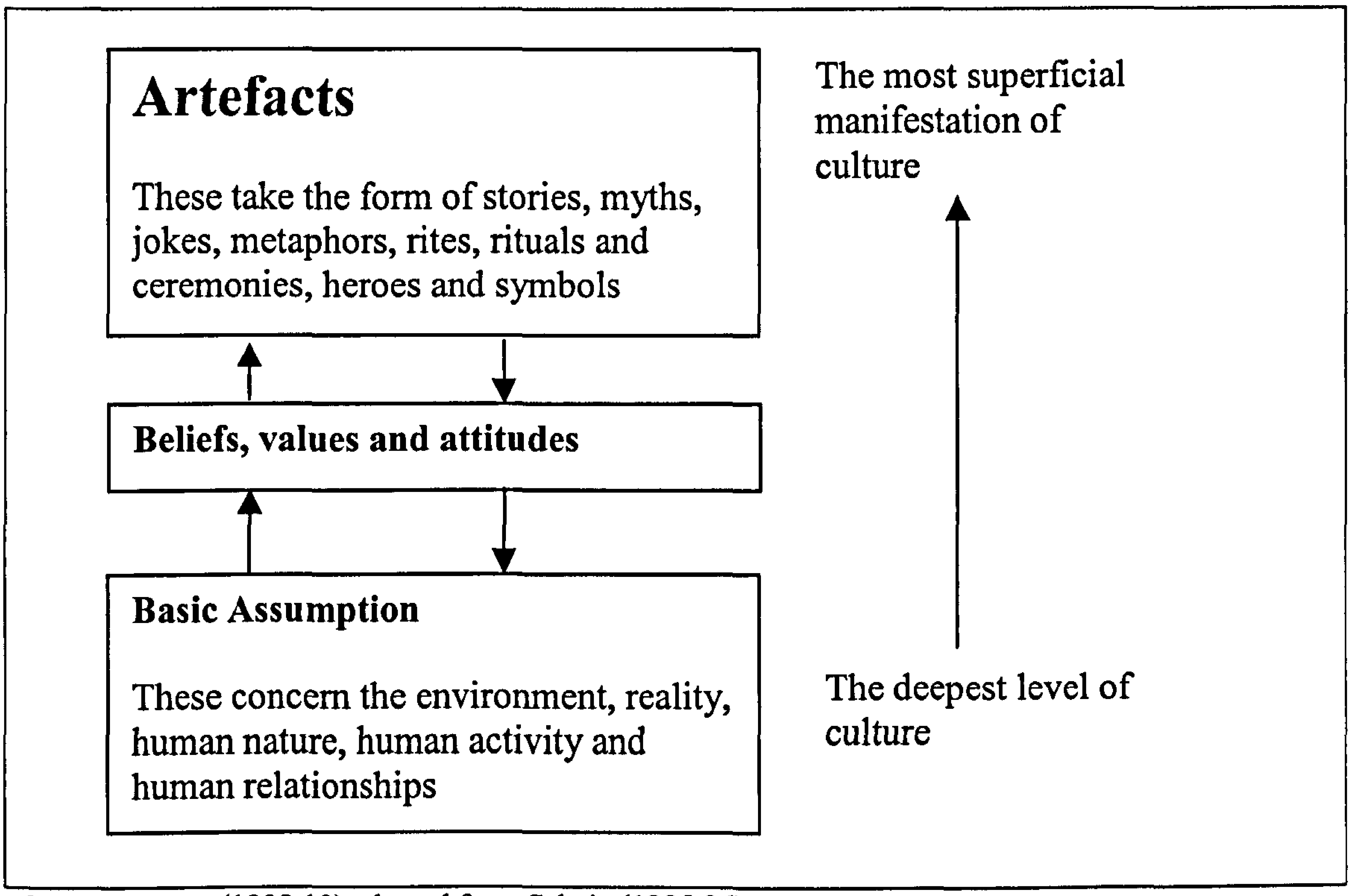
The question of how organisational culture is defined is an important one because it affects how research is undertaken (Alvesson, 2002; Brown, 1998). Definitions that assume an organisation as an entity, veer in two directions; first the organisation is seen as a whole and inherently driven through its culture; the other view considers culture as driven through psychological disposition in the form of 'a set of behaviours and or cognitive characteristics' Brown (1998:9). As outlined earlier, the distinction between the two is important to the methodology of this thesis. Brown (1998: 9) conceptualises organisational culture as referring to,

> 'the patterns of beliefs, values and learned ways of coping with experience that have developed during the course of an organisation's history, and which tend to be manifested in its material arrangements and in the behaviours of its members'.

This would seem a sensible and all encompassing working definition of culture that incorporates the function and material reality of an organisation as an entity, but not to the exclusion of its cultural aspects. These aspects are generally agreed then, as manifesting through: *language* e.g. through stories, myths, metaphors, jokes; *behavioural patterns* e.g. rituals, ceremonies, celebrations; *norms of behaviour; heroes; symbols and symbolic action*; beliefs, values and attitudes; *ethical codes; basic assumptions* and finally, *history* (Brown, 1998:10-11; Senior, 2002:126). Brown (1998) emphasises that there is considerable overlap between these aspects and it is in this respect that Senior (2002) identifies the invisible portion of the iceberg caught up in Brown's (1998) emphasis around, the social relations and interactions of organisational members.

To this end Brown (1998) suggests two models through which organisational culture are commonly observed. The first is Schein's (1985) 'levels of culture' model (Fig. 4 refers), employs the above aspects of culture but conceptualises them at an interactive and fluid level (Brown, 1998:11-12).

Fig. 4 Schein's Levels of Culture



Source: Brown (1998:12) adapted from Schein (1985:26)

Schein's (1985) model as later chapters will reveal, proved useful in this research because it was able to illustrate the circular processes and the agility with which the researched cohort of civil servants negotiated their cultural reality. However, although this model does she a social process through which elements of culture can be embedded it also has, limitations in that despite its fluid circularity, it is somewhat prescriptive and by implication suggests a similarity across organisations that will neatly fit into this model. In truth organisations as Drennan's (1992) 'sources of culture' outlined above has indicated sources of culture for one organisation may be very different to those of another. In other words the permutations of sources inevitably is diverse and in the case of the civil service this is surely epitomised by its very history and sense of tradition which undoubtedly have an impact on its uniqueness as an organisation.

Another model commonly referred to is Hofstede's (1990) shallow to deep manifestations of culture. As indicated in Schein's (1985) model, this again picks up on the notion of shallow or superficial levels of culture to a deep level of culture. Hofstede's (1990) model is based on the notion of concentric circles and at the heart or the deepest level of an organisation's culture are its values. Concentric circles radiating outwards contributory processes or factors include; rituals, heroes and symbols. This is a much looser model and again allows for fluidity but again like Schein's (1985) model in its simplicity it assumes a simple hierarchical structure within which there is a compliant culture. Are all organisation's so straight forward that they would fit into either model? The answer is probably not. For example, can we assume that all organisations have a well-established culture even that a workforce buys into? If an organisation is relatively new or it has a high turnover of staff then establishing a culture becomes more problematic. It would be wrong to assume that for workers the values of an organisation necessarily lie at the heart of a worker's mindset. To go full circle, as Taylor (1911) pointed out a worker's motivation may be more personal or monetary than the core values of an organisation.

Both these models then, assume a simple hierarchical structure and that within organisational culture is composed from a list of variables. The project of maximising efficiency, productivity and profit is clearly the motivator for extensive business research and strategy and while there exists the need for mechanisms to achieve this clearly organisational culture plays its part in the process. The models briefly outlined support what Martin (1992) describes as representative of the 'integration perspective' in that they have been developed to explain how culture is formed, maintained and without doubt in attempting to explain culture, how it can be changed. However, when we introduce the idea of change that water becomes muddied still further.

Organisational Change

Defining organisational change is difficult. Brown (1998) points out several key points in this respect. First, when organisational change is referred to often it is unclear what type of change is being considered. Brown (1998) makes the point that some will refer to norms while others will refer to assumptions. He suggests that at the bottom line assumptions are tied up with norms in that they represent deep-seated values and beliefs. Brown (1998) goes on to highlight that the scale of change is not always defined. He defines the difference between small scale change and large scale change, as 'incremental or first order change' and 'radical or second order change' (1998:116). He concedes that even this cannot be regarded prescriptively because small changes may lead to larger ones and definitions for either small or large are necessarily subjective in the eye of the beholder (1998).

Brown (1998) highlights further problems around the locus of change. When we talk about change to what do we refer? He draws on examples, of country, industry, organisation right down to grass root level when we refer to change at an individual or workforce level. A further consideration is the nature of change and here he distinguishes between behavioural and cognitive change. The degree to which these categories impact Brown (1998) suggests can fall across three levels, individuals might intellectualise change at a level around a system of beliefs and values but for which, no behavioural component is called upon. Conversely individuals might engage at an instrumental level whereby they behave in accordance with the change but cognitively do not subscribe to it or finally, individuals may subscribe at both cognitive and behavioural levels and in effect internalise the change. In this instance change is likely to be enduring (Brown, 1998). The various propositions here are also symptomatic of Kanter's processes of commitment, which will be discussed in Chapter 6. Finally, Brown (1998) identifies time as a final and elusive component of change models. He points out that when we read of management strategies for cultural organisational change, it is unclear what time frame is being referred to, although here he highlights the exception to this in respect of Schein's 'life-cycle framework'.

Brown (1998) identifies five typically representative models of cultural organisational change as follows:

1. 'Lundberg's model, which is based on earlier learning-cycle models of organisational change, and is notable for its attention to external environmental factors as well as the internal characteristics of organisations.
2. Dyer's model, which posits that the perception of a crisis in conjunction with a leadership change are required in order for culture change to occur.

3. Schein's model, which is based on a simple life-cycle framework, and which posits that different culture change mechanisms are associated with different stages in an organisation's development.
4. Gagliardi's model, which suggests that only incremental culture change can properly be described as a form of organisational change.
5. A composite model, based on the ideas of Lewin, Beyer and Trice, and Isabella, which provides some insights into the micro processes of culture change'. (Brown, 1998:118)

In summary, Brown (1998) highlights that each of these models are, useful in some way but mostly revolve around crisis and the importance of leadership in underpinning cultural organisational change. He determines that none of the models have become predominant because of the ambiguity that surrounds the notion of change in respect of what it actually involves. Brown (1998) suggests potentially three key factors need to be included in models of change. He determines these as, 'the availability of alternative cultures, the participants' level of commitment to the current culture, and the fluidity of the current culture' (1998:149).

Collins (1998) suggests that two approaches to the management of change are, the under socialised model of change and over socialised model of change. The former he determines as 'n-step' guides to change (Collins, 1998:82), that is, practical recipes for change often found through the doctrines of management 'gurus' such as Peters and Waterman (1982) and Kanter (1972). Ackroyd and Crowdy (1990) in a study of slaughter men found that what informed organisational values was underpinned by wider universal values derived from societal culture. They suggest that,

'On the face of things the idea of culture is attractive because it seems to offer an understanding of behaviour. It is assumed to be a useful perspective, making available new levers for the active manager to grasp. For this reason the manager's approach to culture, and that of many academics too, has no serious desire to understand the paradoxes and complexities of our belief system, or the difficulties – both intellectual and practical, that the conscientious examination of culture will reveal'
(Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990:12).

This research affirms the 'n-step' approach that Collins advocates. Collins (1998:83) suggests that such mantra follow a typical format of,

1. Develop strategy
2. Confirm top level support
3. Use project management approach
    a. Identify tasks
    b. Assign responsibilities
    c. Agree deadlines
    d. Initiate action
    e. Monitor
    f. Act on problems
    g. Close down
4. Communicate results

Collins (1998:84) makes the point that the number of steps may of course, differ but essentially a pragmatic approach to change is adopted within these kinds of models that are fundamentally based on,

> ' a rational analysis of organisational change, a sequential approach to the planning and management of change, (and) a generally up-beat and prescriptive tone'.

He goes on to further make the point that within such models there is an assumption that organisations are co-operative, further that because the literature in this field does not account for the social processes that will aid (or hamper) individuals in respect of their contribution to effecting change, this approach can be designated as a 'closed system' approach (Collins, 1998). In this approach then, 'organisation' takes on a life of its own, its needs are dominant and so these models of change undervalue the social relations and patterns of activity that make up cultural life. Conversely Collins (1998) identifies that the over emphasis on n-step approaches to change have been instrumental in diverting attention to socialised models such as HRM and that potentially this approach too creates a backlash that results in over-socialised models of change.

The 'n-step' approaches to which Collins (1998) refers in respect of organisational change are echoed through the work of Alvesson (2002). He reiterates Weber's ideas around understanding culture through shared meaning, rituals and symbolism that make up cultural and, or, corporate life. Alvesson (2002:1-2) suggests that,

> 'rationalistic business recipes, have partly replaced culture and the focus on 'people' as the latest fashion for companies and managers during the first half of the 1990's'.

and, to this end he suggests that to some extent 'knowledge management becomes a matter of cultural management'. In other words then, Martin's (1992) three perspectives are particularly useful here. 'Cultural management' (Alvesson, 2002) or 'n-step guides' (Collins, 1998) clearly do not fall into either the fragmentation or differentiation perspectives but instead sit squarely in the integration perspective. A perspective that is management driven around its simplicity in assuming a social and cohesive order that will be compliant with management strategy and from which a complimentary culture will form.

This study seeks to understand HRM as a cultural force of change in the civil service. The civil service as already determined is a unique organisation. In many ways it is difficult to define it as an organisation because it is made up of so many component parts. For example, it is clearly driven by Whitehall offices of government from which policy is disseminated across the respective departments. Already we have two cultures to consider, that of Whitehall and those of the respective departments. Within each department there exists a hierarchical structure often broken down into divisions and teams. Culture therefore emanates out of each. A civil servant is first and foremost a member of the civil service and its culture therein, s/he then belongs to a departmental culture, then possibly divisional culture and then likely a team culture.

The complexity of these affiliations, illustrate the difficulty in applying Hofstede (1990) and Schein's (1985) levels of culture at too basic a level. Necessarily the civil servant is likely to have different levels of affiliation and identification depending on which culture is being referred to. HRM in the civil service is a management strategy employed to play its part in the ongoing project of modernising government. The aims of this research are to establish the extent to which civil servants recognise and buy into HRM's message of change and to explore its potential for effecting cultural change.

Chapter 2

Methodological Discussion

Sociology and the Analysis of HRM

The literature reviewed in the previous chapter was drawn from the fields of sociology and management. It highlighted that within sociology predominately the focus has been located within a functionalist perspective that sought to understand order and conflict. From an interpretivist perspective researching social organisations involves understanding regulative order and the actions of social actors in constructing that order. There is little evidence to suggest that ethnographic research has been conducted in organisations, particularly in respect of the civil service or indeed into the effects of HRM and change. This thesis sets out to redress this oversight.

Within the field of management Collins (1998) clearly identifies that sociology can contribute widely in understanding organisational life through its culture and in relation to wider societal issues. Martin (1992) highlights the point that most research conducted has a tendency to be from the integration perspective that specifically looks to find the social glue that ensures consensus and that seeks clarity that will inform management strategy. Morgan (1990) likewise suggests that organisational analysis is too preoccupied in problem-orientated research that seeks practical solutions and both Morgan (1990) and Hassard (1993) similarly call for a fresh approach to organisational research that embraces multi-paradigmatic approaches. Alvesson,

(2002) advocates that to understand organisations, you first have to engage with culture at a micro level. Alvesson (2002:195) suggests that,

> 'The 'management-centric' interest in 'thin description' of corporate culture can be contrasted with the 'thick description' which examines complex layers of meanings in the anthropological tradition (Geertz, 1973). And, while recognising the legitimacy and values of studies or corporate culture, it can rightly be argued that the use of culture studies to call into question take-for-granted understandings and challenge parochialism has on the whole remained underdeveloped'.

He (2002:194) continues,

> 'Geertz (1973) suggests that anthropologists do not study villages, they study *in* villages. Organisational culture researchers might benefit from reconceptualising their projects and beginning to study *in* organisations (bearing in mind that organisations are also part of society'.

In this respect sociology particularly in the interpretivist tradition, has much to offer organisation and management studies. This research is located in a 'Division' of a large government department and it seeks to understand how civil servants in a traditional hierarchical bureaucracy engage with the management strategy of HRM. In this respect it takes a top-down approach in that it seeks to theoretically understand HRM as a management approach and as a departmental strategy but importantly, it takes a bottom-up approach that seeks to understand the meaning that civil servants take from the message of HRM. In other words, the extent to which it impacts on their lived realities at either a conscious or subconscious level. In doing this, the research also locates the research field both historically and territorially in respect of its local history and foundations.

The aim of this research then, investigated how Civil Servants negotiated the effects of HRM as a strategy for change. Sociological interpretivist enquiry was conducted by means of an organisational ethnography. This chapter will be split into two sections. Section One, will open by briefly contextualising this research and its methods alongside the methods of other civil service research. It will then move on to briefly consider the origins of ethnography focusing on its nature and intent before then moving on to explore its relationship with sociology and its practical application in sociological research. The discussion will then progress to consider issues around reflexivity and reflexive practice in organisational research. In Section Two, the research field will be introduced alongside ethical and, access and sampling issues. The data analysis methods employed will be outlined and issues leaving the field will be discussed.

Section I

Civil Service Research

Research in the civil service is largely, conducted by a team of 'in-house' Home Office researchers and statisticians. As such access to the civil service can be difficult and few sociological studies have been conducted at 'grass root' level. Of those outlined in the previous chapter, most research is determined as a 'case study' which inevitably culminates in the use of interviews. For example, Foster and Hoggett (1999) in their study of the Benefits Agency conducted semi-structured interviews and follow up discussions with management, trade unions and benefit teams. Cunningham, Lord and Delaney (1999) conducted what they describe as in-depth semi-structured interviews and Waterhouse and Lewis (2004) engaged in interviews and focus groups. Brown's (2004) paper was based on a review of policy and theory while Seifert and Tegg 1998) undertook their research in three phases, two of which involved questionnaire and the third involved semi-structured interviews.

Finally, the piece of research that bears any similarity to the research conducted in this thesis, is that of Korvajarvi (1998) who conducted what she describes as ethnographic fieldwork in a Finnish Employment Office. This research was conducted by a 'close' team of three female researchers, who at each stage of the research, collected data by questionnaire. Supplementary to this they describe their fieldwork observation as non-participant in that they did not work for the organisation. However, they did participate in the everyday interactions of office life, conducting conversations and interviews so the extent to which they participated is somewhat debatable. However, the methodology employed in Korvajarvi's (1998) study is the closest to that employed in this research. Korvajarvi (1998:22) defines research that qualifies as ethnographic as follows,

> 'Our approach can be described as ethnographic. This means above all two things: (1) we used several different methods in gathering the research material, and (2) we were interested in, among other things, how white-collar workers themselves produce everyday gendering in routine activities'.

This seems a somewhat vague definition of the true meaning of ethnography in that it does not reflect its true the depth of cultural understanding that it brings. Therefore, to contextualise and understand the richness and depth of ethnography, the following section will briefly outline its origins before going on to locate it as an appropriated method within sociological research.

Ethnography: An Anthropological Tradition

> 'A study becomes ethnographic when the fieldworker is careful to connect the facts that s/he observes with the specific features of the backdrop against which these facts occur, which are linked to historical and cultural contingencies' (Baszanger and Dodier 1997:10).

In origin academic ethnographic fieldwork was developed as a method of enquiry within the discipline of anthropology in the late 19th Century (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Neuman, 2000). In opposition to the rational value-laden study of human phenomena through a positivistic methodology, ethnography developed in the naturalist tradition (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Smith, 1998). Initially ethnographic accounts took the form of travel logs produced by missionaries, travellers and government officials. These accounts provided researchers with 'rich' data and often the researched culture was referred to as exotic or 'uncivilised' (Behar, 2003; Marvasti, 2004). In origin such labels were assumed from an ethnocentric standpoint that privileged Western culture and knowledge (Behar, 2003; Marvasti, 2004). Travellers and researchers were encouraged to gain the trust of those under surveillance in order to gather accurate information (Marvasti, 2004).

However, establishing rapport and trust was not to be gained at the expense of objectivity and researchers had to guard against the risk of 'going native' and the potential consequences of politically jeopardising the social relationship between 'the civilised self and the savage other' (Marvasti, 2004:39). Bronislaw Malinowski, the first ethnographer to live with a group of people for an extended period of time, encouraged this closeness in order that the group's customs, beliefs and social processes could be observed through the eyes of the 'native' (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Marvasti, 2004; Neuman, 2000). From this culturally relativist standpoint, the link with colonialism and an ethnocentric tendency toward objectification and construction of the 'other', has to some extent, left ethnography with a negative legacy around the politics of storytelling (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Behar, 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Seale, 2004). Ethnography as a practical method of data collection did not take on its full significance within sociology until it was fully harnessed as an interpretivist method by the Chicago School (Neuman, 2000). This will be discussed in further detail but first a brief outline will contextualise early sociological fieldwork and the rise of interpretivism within sociology.

Ethnography: Sociological Research

In sociology, the first recorded field work study outside of anthropology was conducted by Charles Booth and Beatrice Webb who in the 1890's alongside survey work, engaged in naturalistic observation of London's poor (Neuman, 2000; Scott, 2002). The origins of participant observation are thought to have heralded from Germany and a three-month study conducted by Gohre (1890) (Neuman, 2000). Gohre who assumed the guise of a factory apprentice went on to keep detailed accounts of his observations of factory life and the publication of these are said to have influenced the work of Weber and other scholars (Neuman, 2000).

Alongside ethnography, sociology's move toward interpretivism needs to be located. Here the work and influence of Dilthey (1883) and Weber (1949) needs to be acknowledged around the concept of Verstehen. The epistemological root of interpretivism lies in the perception of being and through the subjective worldview of the researched (Neuman, 2000; Scott, 2002). Dilthey proposed that two types of science existed; Naturwissenschaft, based on abstract thinking (Erklarung) and Geisteswissenschaft based on empathetic understanding (Verstehen) (Neuman, 2000; Scott, 2002). It was this latter concept that Weber (1949) extended still further through social action theory. He proposed that research necessarily needed to be embedded in empathetic understanding through the thoughts and feelings that underpinned individual agency. To that end he extended the concept of Verstehen to include Acktueller, by means of objective observation and Erklander, through reflexive empathic engagement by the researcher (Weber, 1949).

This classical thought then, emphasised hermeneutical understanding through the study of a phenomenon as a 'whole'. This was to have a significant influence in the field of interpretivism and ethnography as a method of sociological enquiry (Neuman, 2000; Scott, 2002, Silverman, 2001). At the beginning of the 20th Century the Chicago School was to harness some of the data collection techniques of ethnography, for example, engagement in informal interviews and through observation. Evidence of this can be seen through the work of Mead, Dewey, James and Whyte (Neuman, 2000, Marvasti 2004; Scott, 2002). In this respect then, the Chicago School were responsible for bringing together the philosophy of interpretivism and ethnography. Distinguished from the early observational studies such as Booth and Webb's in the 1890's, the Chicago School embraced and appropriated the anthropological tradition of 'living' a culture. It was through this embodiment that they sought to engage with the research phenomenon at a social and cultural level.

The driving force toward this approach came largely from the direction of Robert Park, who advocated that researchers needed to 'get their hands dirty' when undertaking research, the Chicago School set about a programme designed to investigate people in Chicago who were marginalized and afflicted with social problems (Neuman, 2000; Marvasti 2004). The Chicago School, adopting an anthropological model of research, advocated principles that people should be studied in their 'natural' settings, engaged in direct interaction and through observation and, as a direct consequence the social understanding gained should inform academic theory and where possible, social policy (Neuman, 2000). The tradition established at the Chicago School gathered momentum during the 1940's and into the 1960's. Interpretivism and as a data collection method ethnography was popularised still further through the work of Becker, Blumer and in particular, through the accessibility and popularity of Goffman's texts, for example, The *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), *Asylums* (1961) and *Stigma* (1963).

Ethnography: A Diverse Legacy

Today, as a research method, ethnography is used across a wealth of disciplines, e.g. geography, history, across the social sciences including gender and media studies through to education, management, design and the law (Wacquant, 2003). Yet its predominant use is maintained through anthropology and sociology (Gray, 2003; Katz and Csordas, 2003; Wacquant, 2003). Wacquant (2003:6) in highlighting the diverse styles of ethnographic work conducted in organisations includes the, 'modern, neo-modern, and post-modern; positivist, interpretive and analytic'; phenomenological, interactionist and historical; theory-driven and narrative-oriented; local, multi-sited and, global'. Contemporarily Wacquant defines ethnography as,

> 'social research based on the close-up, on-the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do' (Wacquant, 2003:5).

Behar's (2003:16) defines the role of the ethnographer as writing about the 'Really Real'. She says that, 'we write commentaries about commentaries that our informants share with us about their lives' and in particular, 'the stories of those whose 'voices' often go unheard' (2003:18). Behar (2003) makes the point that ethnographies need to be taken on trust and at face value with the hope that the ethnographer was both a sensitive and good listener. A concern highlighted by Snow, Morrill and Anderson (2003) is that while ethnography is about the telling of stories, it should also inform the development of social theory. They suggest that the link between fieldwork and theory is somewhat tentative and this can result in a lost opportunity for fieldwork to realise its practical value.

This is a 'really real' problem for ethnography and for the investigation of organisations. Clearly the telling of stories at grass root level is needed but if we refer back to Burrell and Morgan's (1979) four paradigms for analysing organisations and informing social theory then it is not difficult to see how an objective analysis has largely prevailed. An interpretivist approach is necessarily subjective and it has to a greater extent focused on the 'sociology of regulation'. Traditionally a functionalist approach would focus on the cohering effect of regulation and employ objective means to do this e.g. perhaps through an organisation's manufacturing output figures or its staff turnover. The problem with this is that it necessarily takes an objective standpoint that seeks to affirm the effects of regulation and holds the potential to further embed the notion of structure.

This research took a triangulated approach that considered the structure and, in this case, the history and tradition of the civil service but importantly, it focused on a bottom up approach that specifically sought the stories of civil servants around organisational change and how that change was interpreted and experienced. Why is this research any different or relevant from that which has gone before? In respect of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) four paradigms, it considers not just regulation but the effect of change and it can be argued that the changes the civil service has undertaken in the last three decades has indeed been radical in a political sense. Radical because successive governments have sought to effect radical cultural change and therein, the operational machinery that is bureaucracy. This change has shaken previous calls for civil service reform that have been embedded in securing regulation and uniformity. Change in today's civil service purports to call for diversity and a flexible civil service that uncharacteristically responds quickly to the demands of society. The nature of this change and the effects on civil servants will of course, be unpacked and developed further in succeeding chapters but for now it is enough to say that the merit of this research is that it breaks the norm and tradition of research into the civil service and in subjectively doing so the stories herein, make a distinct contribution in understanding civil service life and the impact that change has on civil servants.

How does this inform social theory? It does so through breaking with traditional approaches and the dearth of organisational research that revolves around functionalism and structuralism and seeks to interpretively voice the subjective narratives of civil servants and how they experience organisational cultural change. In doing so, this research will not only inform academic journal publications but also by reporting to the civil service. In essence it will extend epistemology and in respect of the civil service, it will inform the internal communication policy of the researched Division in question within the 'Department'.

The underlying tension between writing stories and informing theory or policy seems to revolve around issues of reflexivity and how text is written. In this respect then, this tension could have serious repercussions because exerting too much voice in turn could lead to the generation of incorrect theory or policy (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus, 1998; Geertz, 1973). Reflexive writing then is crucial to the project of writing-up data that holds the potential to inform policy.

Reflexive Writing

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) highlight the need for reflexive research that both acknowledges the researcher's practice but also the interplay between practical reflexivity and the philosophic position with which the researcher engages. In respect of organisational research, Burrell and Morgan (1985) suggests, that inevitably organisational analysis is influenced by the paradigm in which the research is located and the metaphors (Morgan, 1997) that are subsequently drawn upon.

In attempting to resolve the interplay of this dynamic, Cunliffe (2003:985) poses a number of reflexive questions that allow organisational research to consider both the 'root' metaphor alongside researcher practice. She suggests that ordinarily reflexivity focuses on questioning 'fact from fiction' in the stories that researchers are told and, the way these are subsequently represented in the writing process. Cunliffe (2003) proposes that 'radical reflexivity' goes beyond simply questioning fact from fiction in respect of participants and instead, considers how the researchers own knowledge and experience is drawn upon to contextualise and construct representation. In doing this, the researcher becomes 'situated' and in turn that narrative is questioned around its influence in the research process. Defining reflexive approaches in cultural anthropology and sociology, Cunliffe (2003:986) suggests that accounts are not accepted at 'face value because social activity is not pre-structured or rule driven but constituted in interaction and/or language' which makes it subsequently difficult to categorise. As a consequence, she suggests that in these disciplines and, in respect of organisational analysis, representations are 'implicitly grounded' in either the root metaphor of 'otherness' or 'betweeness' (2003:986).

The concept of 'otherness' is according to Cunliffe (2003) predicated in post-structural and post-modern approaches on ideas located through language and that meaning is created between the interplay of not what is said, but what is not said. In other words the researcher considers the paradoxical relationship between presence and absence. As a metaphor this is prevalent in organisational research and involves defining the organisation, its processes and structures as entities that are distinct or separate from the research process and those being researched. Further it draws on Derrida's theory of deconstruction (1979) and in respect of organisational study focuses on the organisation as a 'text'. This approach would look to deconstruct, for example, how management ideology and practices create social order or regularity, which would include looking at 'symbolic, discursive, socio-historical, often contradictory and uncontrollable forces' (Cunliffe, 2003:988).

The concept of 'betweeness' is located in social constructionism (Berger and Luckman, 1966). This approach looks at the nature of language and its part in constructing social reality. Through the use of language whether written or spoken, the construction of discourses and through the symbolism of unfolding discursive regimes that construct everyday meaning (Cunliffe, 2003; Foucault, 1972). In this respect ethnography goes beyond simply representing stories or realities and instead, as intersubjectivity enters the research frame and so too, does the researcher who becomes part of the ethnographic representation, (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Denzin 1997). Cunliffe (2003:989) proposes that 'radical' reflexivity opens up a space through which researchers can explore how they 'as researchers constitute meaning through... taken-for-granted suppositions, actions and linguistic practices'. She offers a construction of radical reflexivity as,

1. 'questioning our intellectual suppositions
2. recognising research is a symmetrical and reflexive narrative, a number of 'Participant' stories which interconnect in some way
3. examining and exploring researcher/participant relationships and their impact on knowledge
4. acknowledging the constitutive nature of our research conversations
5. constructing 'emerging practical theories' rather than objective truths
6. exposing the situated nature of accounts through narrative circularity
7. focusing on life and research as a process of becoming rather than already established truth' (Wacquant, 2003).

An obvious criticism to this approach brings into question the validity of the data gained. If all knowledge is partial and subject to circular scrutiny then it remains fluid and subject to change or reconstruction. This in itself paradoxically epitomises the process of social constructionism. Cunliffe suggests that there are few examples of radical reflexive organisational research and advocates the need for what she calls a 'narrative circularity' that traces the situated and partial nature of research accounts and inevitably this includes the researcher (2003:990). As part of the research process and in the interests of rich text that embraces a radical reflexive approach, personal reflexivity will break with the tradition of writing in the third person, and necessarily will engage in the practice of situating the researcher through the use of the pronoun 'I' where deemed appropriate.

Personal Reflexivity

> 'Ethnography is the eye of the needle through the threads of the imagination must pass', (Willis, 2000:viii).

At this point several reflexive issues pertinent to this research need to enter the frame. Engaging in fieldwork, Behar (2003:16) suggests,

> 'we go to find the stories we didn't know we were looking for in the first place'.

This research at conception set out to investigate how change was communicated in the civil service. However, the very process of the ethnography as Behar (2003) suggests, is to seek out stories that we did not know we were looking for. In other words, ethnography allows the researcher to enter the field with little knowledge other than the desire to learn about its culture and its ways of 'being'. At the point of entry, the intention was to investigate the civil service's culture around change and how change was communicated, that part of the story was at least clear. However, it was through the ethnographic process that it became even clearer that an underpinning and driving force of change in the civil service was in fact, its HRM strategy. In this respect then, the ethnographic story began to unfold. The title of this research, 'There and Back Again', is symbolic at several levels. Not least of which because I was employed as a civil servant for twelve years. Perhaps predictably, my interest in organisations is founded on my working life experience. The following chapter charts the history of the civil service and the ongoing process of reform that it experiences. But at this early stage it is important to state my former experience and interest in organisational issues.

Prior to entering higher education in 1996, I chose to take voluntary redundancy from the civil service. As the next chapter will indicate, from the mid 1980's through to present time there has been an ongoing drive to reduce the number of civil servants in post. While I took my leave voluntarily from the civil service this was accompanied by a sense of unfinished business. Unfinished in that I was caught up in a process of change that I never fully understood other than at a grass root operational level. Information around change that disseminated across the civil service and cascaded down the hierarchy of respective departments seemed a partial and incomplete account in that it never fully explained the political or social processes that informed it. Following experience of market-testing, unsuccessful tendering and faced with the prospect of redeployment, I changed direction and took my leave. However, I did leave with some regret and in frustration at the arbitrary processes that I could not fully identify. In short this was unfinished business that was to become the focus for this research.

Despite all efforts to remain objective this former civil servant's experience, without question, will have influenced the research. Perrow (2000:470) makes the point,

> 'we do not and perhaps cannot have an 'objective' or 'disinterested' inquiry into these matters, because as theorists and researchers we are shaped so substantially by the organisations we seek to understand and study. We are dependent upon the social constructions of both our workplace and the objects being studied, rather than being independent of the subject matter, and this I will refer to as our 'entrapment'.

In respect of radical reflexivity, it is absolutely necessary to recognise that my past experiences and knowledge will have impacted on the way the research was conducted, the data collected and its interpretation. I also need to make clear that this research was conducted in my former Department and in my former building. However, it was not conducted within my former area of work or with civil servants that I had formerly worked with. Nevertheless, the Department in question has shrunk considerably over the past 10 years and my face was familiar to some in and around building's corridors and lifts etc.

However, in many respects my former service was also useful in this investigation. For example, my prior service was particularly helpful in gaining research access and similarly my prior knowledge and experience around understanding of the Department's hierarchy, its structural and cultural processes allowed me to fit in quickly and make sense of the stories I heard. Perhaps most importantly, it was advantageous around the recruitment of participant volunteers. The initial drive for volunteers was sluggish but once I had entered the field and my face was recognised alongside my name, recruitment was kick started and civil servants in the researched division quickly accepted me into their space and allowed me to become quickly immersed in their culture. Further reflexive commentary on the research process is located in the conclusion of this thesis.

Theoretical Standpoint

In respect of this research the theoretical standpoint adopted is informed through social constructionism. It sets out to understand how civil servants negotiate change and the effects of HRM in their everyday realities. To reiterate, Cunliffe (2003) suggests that reflexive organisational researchers fall across one of two positions, 'otherness' or 'betweeness'. This research is fully embedded in the latter. However, she also calls for new forms of research that challenge our ways of knowing organisational reality (Cunliffe, 2003). While reflexively this research focus is on understanding the construction of meaning for civil servants it also inevitably accepts into the equation the question of 'otherness'. Marvasti, (2004:59) suggests that institutional ethnography,

> 'is about the 'big picture'. It is the detailed description and analysis of how larger social organisations operate'.

In the truest sense, this research is not an institutional ethnography, in that its specific focus is not on the institution and its structure. However, the uniqueness of the civil service as a huge, hierarchical and historic institution that is constantly called into question renders it firmly in the research frame. . In locating meaning, the participants regularly engaged in the process of 'otherness' in order to contextualise their reality. Necessarily then, this research while theoretically firmly embedded in Cunliffe's category of 'betweeness' and social constructionism, also necessarily engages with 'otherness'.

Collins (1998) makes the point that research into organisations tends to fall across two perspectives. An under-socialised model that privileges structure over agency and an over-socialised model where the reverse is true i.e. agency over structure. Collins (1998) suggests that these are not necessarily competitive perspectives but that they sit comfortably alongside each other mirroring the contemporary shift in management from, a systems approach to that of culture. In design this research has been mindful of this distinction.

This study takes a multi-method approach that is both bottom-up and top down. Its bottom-up approach specifically focuses on the participant cohort but it does so by contextualising it from the top down. In other words, the history of the civil service and its programme of reform through to its implementation of HRM are necessarily grounded within its parameters through the use of documentation and its intranet facilities. This multi-method approach to the collection of data seeks to conceptualise the organisation and its culture as a whole. From a reflexive point of view, this means that the organisation as an entity within which the civil servants negotiate reality necessarily, engages with both issues of 'otherness' and 'betweenness'. In this respect then, a triangulated approach has been adopted that focuses on the participant cohort but it does so in the working context of the civil service and through the gaze of its HRM strategy. This is important because it raises sociological issues around how organisational structures inform or influence culture and vice versa and, in this particular instance, the effectiveness of HRM in initiating an organisational and cultural change.

Section 2

Entering the Field

> 'It is impossible to understand human conduct by ignoring its intentions, and it is impossible to understand human intensions by ignoring the settings in which they make sense', (Czarniawska 1998:4).

The research was conducted in a division of a government department. The department in question has chosen to remain anonymous and for this reason it is difficult to describe its full history. In the interests of protecting anonymity the following account will include approximations where indicated. From here on in the respective division and department will be described as the 'Division' and the 'Department'. Its history is important and has an impact on the civil servants that work there and have taken part in this study.

Many of the large Government Departments in operation today can be traced back to the mid to late 19th Century. The Department is no exception in this respect. During its long history its name has been changed on approximately eight to ten occasions. Not only has its name changed but as a consequence of ongoing civil service reform so too, has its function. Often departments are merged and in addition to assuming new functions they sometimes take on a new identity. The Department over the last fifteen years (approximately) has experienced both. Initially a large government department, like many departments through the Thatcher years, its functions were devolved out to newly formed agencies, which worked in partnership with the home department. In the 1990's the Department was considerably reduced or 'downsized' and it merged with a smaller department.

This was a significant change because the Department had always been known as a 'flagship' department. A flagship department is so named because it is considered to be at the cutting edge of government and its function is supported through innovation and creativity at the level of its management, its workforce and through technology. The two departments that merged did not share the same status. The importing department was not known as a flagship department and in reputation, it was considered to be somewhat old fashioned. After the merger, the original element of the Department's function sat alongside its new incoming function but over a period of time its former function was relocated. Today little remains of the work it originally carried out. This has had a significant impact on the number of its original civil servants and today the remaining workforce of the original Department are largely employed across its Headquarter Sites. Here they are engaged in new activities, raising the profile of the merged department and through the practical sharing of their expertise with their relatively new colleagues. This is a significant point, because clearly as the data later reveals the merger between these two departments went beyond issues of operational functionality in that the merger brought together two distinct working cultures. The research was located in a Division of one of the Headquarter Sites and predominantly with civil servants who were employed under its former guise.

Come on in ......

The civil service generally employs its own team of in-house researchers via the Home Office. Following a conversation with one of these at a British Sociological Association (BSA) event it was anticipated that the research request was likely to be declined. However gaining access to the Department was easier than envisaged. My gatekeeper was a former manager and colleague who supplied the name of a senior manager who was known to have an 'enquiring mind' and who supported creative initiatives. Following a formal approach in September of 2001, a meeting was arranged for December 2001 with an associate of the senior manager. At this meeting it was agreed that the civil service and more specifically the Department continued to experience an ongoing programme of reform and change. It was proposed that an ethnographic study be conducted that considered how such change was communicated to, and interpreted by, civil servants. This proposal was taken away in order that it could be 'floated' to Divisional Managers across the Headquarter site.

One of these Divisional Managers was interested in communication processes and a subsequent meeting was arranged in April 2002 where it was collaboratively agreed that in exchange for a report around the effectiveness of Divisional communication, the study could commence. It was agreed that all participants would be volunteers and that the Divisional Manager would endorse the research to staff as a worthwhile activity. It was also agreed that the data gathered from the participants would remain confidential and that participant anonymity would be protected through the use of pseudonyms. The Divisional Manager generously provided administrative support and his PA was highly proactive in circulating recruitment flyers and, in arranging appointments and rooms for initial interviews.

In respect of access, members of the Department were highly proactive in arranging the necessary security clearances. In doing this, they arranged the issue of identity and parking badges that permitted open access the site's secured premises and buildings. Similarly security IDs were issued in respect of the Department's IT facilities and full access was given to the Department's intranet. The research took place over a period of fourteen months and contact is still maintained with a number of the participants who took part in this study.

In total then, approaches for permission and access to the Department commenced in September 2001 and were finalised in April 2002. In many ways this was a frustrating and anxious waiting period. A contingency plan for another research field had been planned but of course, this could not progress until the Department had made up its mind whether or not it wished to take part. At each step of the way the three civil servants I interacted with held the fate of the research in their hands and in respect of the first two interactions the wait between communication and response was frustratingly slow. However, once the Divisional Manager made his decision it accelerated at a fast pace and further will be said about this in the 'Procedure' section that follows.

Ethics

Anonymity and Participants

At the initial meeting with the Divisional Manager it was agreed that all participants would be volunteers, however as the research was to be long term, within the Division, it would of course, soon become obvious who had in fact, volunteered. It was agreed that all parties would be protected around their anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. In the final report and in any discussions with management, it was agreed that the data would not be identifiable. All the participants who took part in this study were advised of this as part of the informed consent procedure.

To this end participants were asked whether they would like to pick their pseudonym. In several respects this was a mistake. Firstly, this proved problematic because some did choose their pseudonyms and some did not. Further, when some of the participants chose their names, either at the time or sometime afterwards, they advised me of the relevance of the names they had chosen. What was realised at a later point, was that some of these names potentially identified the participants to work colleagues or management. For example, it came to pass that some chose their middle names, or conversely were known by their middle names and accordingly chose their first Christian name. Others chose their nick-names and some chose family names of loved ones and sometimes, in memory of loved ones. In short then, giving the participants this option was a mistake because it raised problems around protecting their anonymity within the data set.

In order to ensure that anonymity was maintained, a value judgement was made to assign a complete new set of names to the research cohort. Ethically I struggled with this around issues of participant empowerment and collaboration and while I remain dissatisfied with this outcome, I think anonymity has to take precedence and therefore, consider the means justifies the end in taking this course of action. A full list of the participants' pseudonyms can be found at Appendix 3. At Appendix 3, a breakdown can also be found of the number of civil servants in each grade that took part in this research. In respect of ensuring anonymity, the grades have not been identified alongside the names. As the organisation is hierarchically structured in respect of its grade system, the number of civil servants in the higher grades tends to be less, therefore, it is not possible to break this down further because of anonymity issues.

Anonymity and the Department

At the initial meeting with the Divisional Manager, issues around whether the Department would want to be named in the research were discussed. The Divisional Manager, needed to think and discuss this with his senior managers. It should be pointed out that a Divisional Manager is the highest grade on the HQ site and so any negotiation would be with senior officers in London. The Divisional Manager has a very fraught timetable in that his days are action packed when in London.

At the outset the Divisional Manager's opinion was that he and his Division had nothing to hide and at a personal level he would have no objection to being named but obviously such a decision would need clearance and was not his to make. He persistently raised this issue with his senior officers but actually obtaining a decision from them was difficult and the research was long under way when this finally came through. I had anticipated that the research would not be allowed to start until this was established but this was not to be the case. In all respects this would have been preferable albeit as it turned out around time, it would have caused a lengthy and frustrating delay.

When the decision was finally received, it was that the Department wished to remain anonymous. This is a great shame albeit understandable around the Department's public relations. It was advised that this was because the Department did not know what the findings would be in respect of its communication processes. This was a great shame in this respect because the Department has excellent communication processes albeit that the cohort imply that there is too much information communicated to them. However, in respect of this being an ethnographic piece of research from which the data and themes emerge, it is perhaps understandable that the Department should be wary particularly as it ordinarily is used to being instrumental in deciding and designing its research. To the Department this research as an unknown quantity was probably outside the realms of comfort.

Participants

The participants who took part in this study were career civil servants. Many of the cohort had been in 'service' since they were fifteen or sixteen years old and some had commenced their employment with the Department when it first relocated and established as a Head Quarter site in its North West town. The age of the civil servants ranged from twenty-two years through to fifty-six years. The gender balance in the study broke down to eleven females and thirteen males. Their service in the Department ranged from three years to thirty-six years.

The Procedure

The research was conducted over two phases. In Phase One, the intention was to recruit a small group of six participants with whom I would spend the summer engaged in initial semi-structured interviews, periods of shadowing and observations. The intention behind this was that in Phase Two, the emergent themes would be explored with a second and larger cohort through semi-structured interviews. A full discussion of the process and the choices made will follow, but first, it is necessary to discuss the sample and recruitment processes.

Calling all volunteers ....

Extensive angst was experienced around whether the Department would agree to this research so much so, that the process of recruiting the participants came as a sharp awakening. At the initial meeting with the Divisional Manager, it was agreed that if I wrote the rationale around the research and what was required in respect of potential volunteers, he would circulate this to all staff in the Division.

The total number of staff in the Division is approximately 45 – 50, some of whom work from home. The Divisional Manager duly circulated the information and initial response was very poor and totalled the grand number of two. At this point, the research looked in jeopardy. I was advised that this was not surprising because people were so busy that it probably seemed a little daunting to have to commit to a process of shadowing and interviews.

However, a research decision was made that having come thus far and with the good faith of the two officers who had demonstrated commitment in volunteering, the research would initially progress with the possibility borne in mind that a snowball sample, might still be possible. The intention around proceeding was obviously to raise the research profile and also my profile at a personal level. Snowball sampling of this kind relies on people referring or introducing other people of similar characteristics to the research (Neuman, 2000; Searle, 2004).

At first I was treated with some degree of suspicion. The civil service over the last two decades has gone through numerous phases of scrutiny, for example through market test procedures and processes of review and audit. As such there is a perception of time and motion type researchers with clipboards who perhaps should be avoided. As people got to know me, I was later told that initially my research generated such speculation.

However, the two volunteers were highly instrumental in breaking down such speculation and paved the way for my snow-ball to grow and, grow it did. Additionally once I had spent time with these individuals on the various sections, people became familiar with my face and lack of clipboard. I engaged in tea breaks and lunch with these participants and was active in engaging in wider section conversation around for example, social issues, TV, holidays and so on. Added to this my former life as a civil servant meant that my face was familiar to some people and some would engage me in conversation about this. I also noticed that when I sat on one of the sections quite a number of staff would stop and engage in conversation with members of the respective section. It was confided to me that people were curious and one of the sections in question advised me that ordinarily they did not get this many passers by or visitors. In short alongside the sponsorship from my 'group of two', my profile was raised and I ceased to be quite such a threatening presence. My snowball grew to the required 'group of six'.

In Phase Two of the research the intention was to recruit between fifteen to twenty participants with whom I would engage in a semi-structured interview.

When recruitment for the second phase of research was launched in the Spring of 2003, eighteen volunteers were recruited. The total number of participants who took part in this study then, was twenty-four.

The Process

In Phase One of the research participants were identified as 'key participants'. In Phase Two, the participants were identified as 'peripheral participants'. This distinction is made because the research expectation in the 'peripheral' category was much less in respect of time and data collection, than in the 'key' participant category.

Key Participants

As already detailed, the initial recruitment for key participants yielded a harvest of two. As time went on this increased to the required six. Research with this group started in earnest in May 2002 and was intensive through the summer months until the commencement of teaching at the end of September 2002. However, it should be pointed out that this did not mark the end of the research time spent with the cohort, outside of teaching commitments this was ongoing through to the completion of the research late July of 2003.

A Triangulated Affair

Over an intensive period of five months data was collected through multiple means. This involved a combination of semi-structured interviews, conversations, group discussions, 'shadowing', observation and departmental secondary sources. Initially when the key participants were recruited an informal semi-structured interview cum meeting took place. The intention of this was for both the participant and myself to get to know each other. At that time, the purpose and the nature of the research was outlined alongside the expectation around the participant involvement. The participants were fully informed and assured around confidentiality and processes of anonymity. Once the extent of their involvement and issues around anonymity was explained the participants were given the option to either consent to their participation or to withdraw if for example, they thought the commitment was too much or would interfere with their work schedule. After consenting it was at this time that they were collaboratively asked whether they would like to choose their pseudonym and as outlined earlier, some did and some did not.

This initial meeting was important because it not only allowed the parameters of the research etc to be outlined, but it also gave the participants the opportunity to withdraw not only in terms of their work commitments but at a personal level. It gave both parties the opportunity to get to know each other in what was to become a close working relationship. In respect of data drawn from these initial interviews cum meetings, data was collected around the participants' work history and much of the time was spent in them telling their

Departmental story. Again this was ideal in that it allowed me to share my story with them and for us to bond over shared work place locations. In this respect while I had never worked with any of the cohort, the HQ site at one time was very large and it necessitated staff moving around the different sections in order to gain experience or promotion. In this respect some the cohort and I had worked at different times on various section or units across the site. This sharing of information further aided my acceptance into the Division's culture and in my absence, it became obvious that they had passed my story on to other members of staff who were keen to tell me of further shared experiences.

Me and My Shadow....

Following the semi-structured interview cum meeting I then set up a regular pattern with each of the key participants where I would spend my days 'shadowing' them. In ethnographic terms this might be categorised as simply observation but in the business sense my experience of this, as a process was more exacting. By 'shadowing' I mean exactly that, it involves spending for example, a full day in the company of a participant engaged alongside their normal working practices. In the first instance, participants are encouraged to talk you through the aspects of their activity. This allowed me to get to know what their respective roles and functions were and in this respect although I was very out of date with current civil service 'speak' around their use of acronyms etc, my previous service was invaluable here. It allowed me to quickly orientate myself to their specific roles.

As time went on and I became more familiar with their respective roles, in sometimes meant that I would spend the day simply sitting alongside them observing their activity, their interactions with customers or their colleagues. Obviously as a method of data collection this can initially feel highly intrusive for participants but as time went on they became used to my presence and in this respect I remained mindful of their responsibilities. Early agreement had been reached that they must ensure that they tell me if they are too busy to spend time with me or, if they just need space or to be quiet around a task or whatever. However, as and when appropriate the process of shadowing and 'hanging out' with individuals and their respective sections allowed me to ask questions around the participants' roles and duties. It also meant I could ask wider questions around the Department and their perceptions of the Department.

Shadowing is not something that is commonly referred to in research terms but it is an active training mechanism within business environments and in particular, in my experience of the civil service. As such then, it was a particularly useful mechanism that the participants were familiar with at a practical level. Initially it was surprising to the civil servants that I would want to spend so much time with them and this caused some amusement, A comment that illustrates this nicely was, 'God I never knew I was so interesting!'

A Bird's Eye View

The process of shadowing was invaluable because it allowed me access not just to the participants but, to their work colleagues and associates. In turn this allowed me to get to know the staff in the Division and facilitated ad hoc conversations and discussions. Not only did the shadowing help then, around snowballing and recruiting for Phase Two of the research, this daily interaction allowed me to become immersed in the culture and to become accepted within the Division. It also afforded opportunity to observe team life and as time went on my familiarity broke down barriers around people being 'on their best behaviour'. Acceptance in this culture was affirmed when I was invited out to birthday lunches, to join the cinema club and as the year progressed, to share in the 'secret Santa' activities of one of the teams and to go on a Christmas meal with them.

The amount of time spent with the key participants varied. This was largely due to their grade and the requirement for them to attend confidential meetings. In terms of the grade breakdown with the key participants, one was an Senior Executive Officer (SEO), two were Higher Executive Officers (HEOs), one was an Executive Officer (EO), two were Administrative Officers (AOs) and one was a Personal Assistant (PA). Given the initial problems around the sample and recruitment process, the mix of grades proved fortuitous.

Although it has to be said that time spent with the SEO was minimal around his work and travel commitments. A date to shadow involved the whole day and some of the officers worked very long days, for example, eight thirty in the morning until seven o'clock in the evening. During the period May to September, apart from a one or two work commitments, I spent each day on site and my time with the key participants was spent at their discretion around their work schedules.

Second to none

The Department's hospitality was far reaching and during times when I could not be with a key participant because of their activities, a desk and PC had been found where I could work. This was ideal because it meant that I could continue my observations of the Division and combine it with further data collection. The PC and intranet access was of enormous use for several reasons. First it allowed me to quickly become au fait with the Department, its aims and objectives etc, but also the wealth of information on its site facilitated my learning around its policies and strategies. Further the familiarity that this afforded me meant that subsequent conversations and interviews were grounded through departmental information. In one instance when I was talking to Shelley, she made the point,

> 'You know more than I do and I work here! That's a bit worrying'

and to be fair, certainly in respect of some of the Department's strategies and the information on their intranet site it seemed that way.

Phase Two

In Phase One then, the objective was to 'live' the working day with the key participants'. As an ethnography the cultural changes that I set out to identify found me in the shape of the Department's HRM strategy. During the intensive life I shared with the key participants, I was afforded the opportunity to find out what their perceptions of the Department and the way it worked were. The information gathered from my time with them, came in several forms. First the initial semi-structured interview cum meeting, was with the participants permission taped and then transcribed. The participants in both phases were offered copies of the transcripts and some accepted this offer. In addition to verbatim transcripts, long conversation or discussions were again taped with permission. In addition to this ethnographic field notes were taken around ad hoc comments or interactions and of course, in respect of observations.

The data from Phase One subsequently informed the points of interest that were to be pursued in Phase Two. The eighteen participants in Phase Two each took part in a semi-structured interview. The duration of these interviews varied but most were around one hour to one and a half hours. These interviews were conducted in a private meeting room and sometimes another booking meant that they could not exceed the hour. In several instances peripheral participants came back to see me in order to share further information. In some instances these interviews far and exceeded my expectation around time and in one case one interview spanned a duration of two and half hours. These interviews were guided by an interview schedule that sought 'domestic' information around role and longevity in the service but specifically focused on the Department's HRM strategy and pertaining issues for example, around pay and promotion, training, the staff survey, work-life balance and so on. Again all interviews and discussions were taped and transcribed verbatim.

A Qualitative Experience

Data flew in from all directions and the wealth of data generated through ethnographic methods is necessarily problematic. All the transcripts and discussions that were taped were thematically analysed. This was undertaken through the tried and tested formula of repetitive reading and coding of the transcript and subsequent generation of as many themes as possible (Neuman, 2000; Parker, 1997). To assist with this two of these readings were carried out while listening to the tapes. This was to ensure that tone and nuances were accurately represented. The generated themes were number coded and for each interview the themes were then analysed for overlap and subsequently collapsed down where appropriate matches or themes were identified (Parker, 1997). This of course proved, far easier with the semi-structured interviews in Phase Two because to some extent driven by an interview schedule, the common themes were already in place, albeit all interviews defy this through contradiction. The themes were then systematically located on a thematic data grid for ease of analysis (Silverman, 1997; Parker, 1997).

In respect of observational field notes, these took the form of jottings and notes taken when and wherever possible. These were subsequently written up as soon as the opportunity presented itself. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) highlight the point that engaging in field work at a participative level means it is necessarily difficult to take copious notes at the expense of missing activity or social phenomenon. In this respect I was perhaps luckier than most because in addition to an evolved short-form of note taking I also write in 'shorthand' which of course, is very fast and is advantageous around issues of confidentiality. At some point during my intensive days in the department there was often opportunity for me to take full advantage of the PC facility and this was enormously useful in keeping up to date with writing up field notes during quiet times.

A Reflexive Note

Two points are worthy of note at this point. These concern the process of leaving the field and the process of perhaps hearing things you do not agree with and make the writing up process difficult. I will start with the latter issue.

Going back to the Department was a cathartic experience. As outlined earlier, the civil service in many ways was unfinished business for me personally. I wanted to know more about the changes successive government were introducing in the civil service. When I left morale was at an all time low as the numbers on site plummeted. Leaving was actually a very difficult decision to make and although I knew that new and exciting horizons beckoned, I had in truth thought of myself as a career civil servant that is, one that sought promotion. To stay would have meant redeployment and site wide, horror abounded in this respect. I knew that to stay could mean I would end up on a section where the duties were indeed factory like and somewhat mundane. I also knew that eventually there would be compulsory redundancy and although ordinarily I knew that I would not fall into this category around skills etc, being 'surplus' and awaiting redeployment was a vulnerable place to be.

My perception around those who stayed and those like me who jumped was mixed. Some people left because the financial package seemed lucrative, others left because they had new horizons to explore and knew that they had the skills that would carry them into other work. Of those who stayed I also knew that some stayed because they were frightened that they would not secure employment elsewhere and in truth, I had members of staff who I knew would struggle in this respect. One of my team who left has never worked since. Also knew of people and indeed, ran into them again during my field work, who counted the days until they retired, so much so, that one knew how many pay days were left until his leaving day and indeed, had been engaged in this activity since before I left in 1996. In some ways I suppose, perhaps somewhat arrogantly, I subscribed to the philosophy that those of us who left were in some ways the brave ones, because we took a chance and were confident around skills sets etc.

My fieldwork brought me crashing down to earth with this assumption. Several times whilst in the Department it was explained to me that the Department was now a professional streamlined organisation and that this was largely due to the cutting out of 'deadwood'. I was apparently, 'deadwood'. Although when this thought occurred to the person saying they inevitably followed it with comments like, 'present company excepted of course'. Nevertheless it was both interesting and in some way, upsetting to be thought of in this way. At a professional level this was an interesting remark and it is one to which I shall return in my conclusion.

The second reflexive issue is in respect of leaving the field. In many ways this is difficult. After having spent so much time with these individuals, to say goodbye, is difficult, although of course, it never is completely goodbye. In this case there is still unfinished business in respect of the collaboratively agreed report, which is due to be written at the end of the PhD process. At a more personal level however, goodbye's remain elusive and perhaps that is how it should be because I am very mindful of the fact that this group of civil servants embraced me and my research, for which, I will always remain indebted. As a constant reminder of my time with them I remain on their group email lists and most days still hear from them in one way or another usually by way of a circulated 'funny'. Additionally I have popped in to catch up with them and I am due to again in the very near future, but now going back I am again, a visitor and in some ways this is difficult.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the field of ethnography and suggested that it is as an appropriate method for conducting sociological research of organisational culture. The rationale of this research has been introduced along with the researched site and the methodological considerations have been discussed. The next chapter will contextualise the researched site still further in respect of the wider civil service alongside its ongoing programme of reform.

Chapter 3

Step by Step: An Emerging Civil Service

The focus of this research investigates the everyday effects of operational change within a division of a British Civil Service department. More specifically, it considers the effects of HRM as a force for change and how civil servants negotiate its disseminated message. In short, it considers how civil servants make sense of a changing environment through their everyday working practices. It poses the question then, why should civil servants be distinct from members of any other organisation? The response is a simple one; compared to other organisations, the civil service is unique in its tradition, hierarchical structure and the service it provides to civil society. Necessarily then, in tandem with its foundation around tradition and structure, the working ethos and identity of today's modern civil service has evolved over time. This chapter charts the origins of the civil service to the formalised structure we know today. It considers its humble beginnings from an informal civil service bequeathed through 'grace and favour' and continues its journey through the call for and, the imposition of, a permanent, organised and objective civil service. Finally the contemporary project of accountability, open and modern government will be introduced and located, alongside the researched department.

Origins

The origins and the structure of the Civil Service are clearly important to define. However, Drewry and Butcher, (1991:32) make the point that this is highly problematic. They suggest there are two key problems that hinder this process, that of 'departmentalism' and, the problem of isolating the civil service from a wider and historical context. In its current form as a formalised and central structure, it can be linked through its recruitment, pay and promotion processes. However, the diversity across its various departments, agencies and partnerships necessarily fragments the picture because of the different work objectives of the respective departments and the array of industrial and non-industrial grades within. It is the complex nature of this diversity that has made many of the civil service reform initiatives detailed through this chapter, all the more difficult.

The origins of what we now know as constitutional bureaucracy must also be located alongside historic changes around social and political democracy. Changes in 'electoral democracy, parliamentary government, the party system, local government, public corporations' (Drewry and Butcher, 1991:32) all contributed to the demand for administrative services and subsequent reform. In 1780, Parliament established what we could now define as a tradition of setting up commissions responsible for inquiry around public offices, administration and accounts (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). This marks a starting point during which institutional structures were established, reorganised and importantly, formalised (Drewry and Butcher, 1991, Pyper 1995). Prior to this date, Drewry and Butcher (1991), take issue with accounts that the Civil Service as an entity predates this, drawing on the administrative historian, Henry Parris' view that the Civil Service "was not permanent, it was not civil and it was not a service" (1969:22 cited in Drewry and Butcher, 1991:37).

Parris' comment is a valid one; today's civil service and importantly its underlying ethos, bear no resemblance to its early formation, which is predominantly associated with the 19th Century. However, bearing in mind Drewry and Butcher's (1991) point above, the wider and earlier context that led to eventual constitutional reform needs to be considered because clearly in origin the civil service did not form in a vacuum or simply come together in the late 18th Century. It has to be historically located in the changes that led toward constitutional reform. The concept of a naïve civil service can be dated back as far as Anglo-Saxon times when serving alongside domestic servants, administrative staff undertook the administration of royal households (Pyper, 1995). Under Norman rule a process of centralisation came about which established 'royal offices and prototype departments' which were concerned with the administrative affairs of the royal household (Pyper 1985:5). Between the intervening years between the Normans and Tudors, the process of centralisation continued around the primary function of collecting royal taxes. However, under Tudor rule new administrative structures began to emerge and increasingly, administration was charged to a new breed of administrative cum political bureaucrats such as 'Thomas Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell and William Cecil' (Pyper 1985:5) who respectively headed up the Privy Council.

A Call for Reform

Throughout the 17th Century as the processes of modernity took hold this necessitated the emergence of a more formalised structure that could underpin wider societal change. From the Privy Council came the Committee of Trade and the Treasury, which Pyper identifies as a time that illustrates the first 'traces of modern Whitehall'

(1995:5). However, it was not until Edmund Burke, Member of Parliament and political philosopher, in 1780 called for 'economic reform' that the administrative and financial dealings of government office were called into question (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pyper, 1995). This is an important turning point and particularly worthy of comment, is the relationship between ministers and their administrators.

The administrative offices held, traditionally had been at the grace and favour of the sovereign. Those in such privileged positions similarly privileged friends and relatives by appointing them as their administrators. The concept of cohesive political parties did not assume authority until the latter part of the 19th Century. Prior to this during the 18th Century, those individuals in a position of authority and enjoying sovereign favour remained in post along with their respective administrative team until such time as they wished to resign or retire. In this respect then, the relationship between minister and his administrative team was a political and subjective one. At this time an outgoing minister would resign and en masse, his administrative team would go with him into opposition (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). This in itself renders the idea of 'civil' service, that is, one, which objectively and non-politically serves civil society, redundant.

There are two related and important issues here. The first issue relates squarely to this point around permanency. Whether in office or opposition, there are clear concerns around subjective affiliation. Ministers subjectively favoured and appointed their administrative team from friends and family. If the subsequent resignation or stepping down from ministerial duties necessarily included the supporting administrative team then this, illustrates Parris' (1969) point perfectly. Such ministerial and administrative movement renders the administrative support as temporary and 'not permanent'. Subsequently such affiliation could not be classed as apolitical or representative of a 'service' that objectively served civil society (Parris, 1969: 22). The second indirectly related and important issue here relates to the practice of attaching sinecures to ministerial or administrative positions (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). These sinecures tended to demand little in the way of administrative commitment or duty but often came in the form of lucrative freehold tenures. As a long-term commitment, these held the potential to be costly to the state and later were to become a concern of the 1853 Northcote-Trevelyan Inquiry.

At the heart of Burke's call in 1780 for 'economic reform', lay such anomalies. Clearly the need existed for unification and a standardisation of practices and personnel across the disparate departments of what can be very loosely referred to as a civil service in the making. At the heart of such reform then, was the need to disentangle administration from costly, personal and subjective political affiliation and to establish a non-political and permanent service. Such administrative reform went hand in hand with the need for political and constitutional reform. The need to effect a system of administration that could manage the increasingly complex business of government necessarily weakened the Crown's political influence (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). As such the foundations of an emerging civil service was to establish a unique non-political administrative relationship with government whose allegiance was distinctly to the Crown and civil society. Paris summed up this new working relationship aptly by distinguishing that the 'monarchy rose above party' while the 'civil service settled below party' (1969:49 cited in Drewry and Butcher, 1991:37). This process of segregation alongside the call for economic reform and accountability necessarily resulted in government business becoming more complex. Alongside this evolved the need for an expanding and defined administrative framework.

In 1782, the Southern and Northern Departments evolved into the Home and Foreign Offices and in 1786 the Privy Council's Committee of Trade became the Board of Trade (Pyper, 1995). This latter case is interesting because overseeing the Board of Trade were two ministers and for the first time, a distinction was made between these two ministerial appointments and their supporting administrative team (Pyper, 1995). This clearly denotes a functional boundary that marks the transition from temporary to permanent administration and this distinct relationship was to continue and remain firmly in place irrespective of government transition. However, progress in establishing a permanent civil service was slow and two key factors need to be considered as it journeyed along toward permanence and unification.

The Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1854)

The first of these involves the Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1854). Both Trevelyan and Northcote over a period of time had immense influence on the recruitment of civil servants and the structure of the civil service we know today. Charles Trevelyan was educated at Haileybury College, founded by the East India Company and intent on formally educating young men destined for the Company's Civil Service (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). Further he was related to the historian and public figure, Lord Macaulay, who in 1854 conducted an inquiry into the Indian Civil Service (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pyper, 1995). After a period of service in India, Trevelyan complete with an established familial interest in sound administration, returned to the United Kingdom whereupon he was offered a senior position in the Treasury. In the journey toward a permanent and unified civil service, both Trevelyan and the Treasury were key factors (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pyper, 1995).

In 1810 an Act of Parliament determined the Treasury as responsible for pay and pensions and later Superannuation Acts (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). The Treasury, ultimately accountable for public monies, underwent numerous inquiries around civil service expenditure and efficiency. In 1848 a succession of inquiries led to the formation of the Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure. As Assistant Secretary, Trevelyan gave evidence of outdated and wasteful administrative processes (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). A much-documented example of such wasteful practice is that of young officials gainfully but uneconomically employed in tedious and routine copying work (Pyper, 1995). Trevelyan proposed radical reform of the Treasury that would economically maximise efficiency; one such measure would distinguish between the duties of senior grades and those of humble copying clerks. Initially such reform was turned down by the Committee but in his position as Assistant Secretary, over successive years, Trevelyan continued to investigate expenditure and efficiency in pursuit of much needed reform (Drewry and Butcher, 1991).

Stafford Northcote, ten years younger than Trevelyan and protégé to the rising William Gladstone, worked and studied the need for administrative reform under Trevelyan. In 1853 the alliance between these two was affirmed when the Treasury commissioned them to investigate and consider the administration of all public departments (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pyper, 1995). Their findings had a significant impact on subsequent civil service recruitment in respect of both pay and conditions and the allocation of administrative tasks. Picking up on Trevelyan's earlier campaign, they proposed a differentiation between superior and 'intellectual' tasks and, inferior and 'mechanical' tasks. Whereas recruitment tended to favour mature and experienced men, Northcote and Trevelyan proposed that young men between the ages of nineteen and twenty five be recruited for superior posts, while for inferior and mechanical posts young men should be recruited between the ages of seventeen and twenty one (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). This is an important transition that marks the beginnings of the hierarchical grade structure that still dominates the civil service today.

Earlier it was noted that the formation of the Board of Trade in 1786 differentiated the tasks and responsibilities of its two ministers from that of the supporting administrative team. Yet despite this differentiation, a system of patronage and favouritism still existed in securing privileged positions. Not only did the Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1854) clearly determine the formation of this primitive grade structure, which has since monopolised civil service recruitment, it also introduced the concept of open competition. The report determined that recruitment must be competitively open through examination. The responsibility for overseeing the recruitment process fell to a newly created independent Civil Service Board (Pyper, 1995), later to become known as the Civil Service Commission, who issued a certificate affirming candidate success. The report further recommended that promotion must be predicated on merit rather than favouritism and finally, that inter-departmental transfer be effected as and when the redeployment of resources was necessary (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pyper, 1995).

In short the Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1854 recommended a unified recruitment strategy that differentiated between grades and tasks and, was supported by a coherent set of internal policies around pay, pension, promotion and transfer. However, the report met stiff opposition and it is at this point that the second key factor in the form of the Treasury needs further expansion. Northcote and Trevelyan were employed within the Treasury and while their inquiry and subsequent report for civil service reform was well received by Gladstone as Chancellor of the Exchequer, it was not received well by cabinet colleagues and senior civil servants (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). The main problem revolved around issues of class. If traditionally a tendency existed around patronage or favouritism, then open competition called this into question. Perception was that open competition and a meritocratic system would redefine boundaries allowing civil servants from the middle class to enter what had traditionally been seen as 'gentleman's' employment, irrespective of the fact that such competition continued the requirement of a university education in the recruitment of superior or 'intellectual' posts (Drewry and Butcher, 1991).

However, despite a change in government and initial hostility to the proposed reforms, the media supported the need for administrative reform by highlighting the waste of public funds and in particular, platforming the administrative inefficiency and incompetence of the handling of the Crimean War (Drewry and Butler, 1991; Pyper, 1995). This and rising public awareness around general inefficiency put pressure on the government and as a compromise the Civil Service Commission (CSC) was established in 1855 to oversee senior civil service recruitment (Drewry and Butler, 1991). Comprised of three men, the Commission established a criteria that considered the proposed nominee's age, physical fitness and intellectual suitability. On satisfying the prescribed criteria, the Commission issued a certificate authenticating suitability (Drewry and Butler, 1991). While this compromise served in establishing normative criteria, competition remained far from open. Patronage of candidates continued through the corrupt yet invisible system of mismatching candidates of lesser ability. Northcote and Tevelyan's recommendation of open competition and the subsequent establishment of the CSC resulted in negligible improvement between the years 1855 – 1868. To illustrate the Commission's initial lack of impact, it is worth noting that out of nine thousand, eight hundred and twenty six certificates of employment suitability issued, staggeringly only twenty eight were issued to candidates recruited through open competition. The remainder were predominantly awarded to candidates recruited with no competition (seven thousand and thirty three) or limited competition (two thousand, seven hundred and sixty five) (Drewry and Butcher, 1991:45).

The question of open competition alongside the various Equal Opportunity Acts clearly remains of paramount importance today in the civil service, but in origin initial implementation across all civil departments was not finally enforced until 1870. The recommendations of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1854) had marked the beginning of cultural and administrative transformation in the civil service, which through the establishment of normative procedures and practices, differentiated between intellectual and mechanical tasks and further, the endorsement of promotion based on merit (Pyper, 1995). In 1875 the Playfair Inquiry supported open competition but called for 'radical reform of the grading structure' which in 1876 resulted in a grading system that distinguished a 'Lower Division of men clerks and boys' who were appointed and transferred as and when their services were required (Drewry and Butcher, 1991:45). The differentiation of a grading system with a Lower Division and Higher Division marks an important transition but before discussing that further, at this point it is worth noting that Edmund Burke's initial call for reform in 1780 and the drive for a unified civil service that endorsed open competition in 1870, marks a lapse of almost one hundred years. Pyper (1995) makes the salient point that enforcement of recruitment and personnel dictum is one thing but implementation is quite another and it was not until Warren Fisher, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, became Head of the Civil Service in 1919 did the full effect of the Northcote-Trevelyan report come into its own (Drewry and Butcher 1991; Pyper, 1995).

Treasury responsibility around public funds and in particular around the civil service had become progressively tighter. Echoing the incompetencies of the Crimean War, civil administration was once again, called into question following the First World War (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pyper, 1995). The dual roles of Warren Fisher resulted in a shake up of the civil service that would have a lasting effect and the emergence of a unified civil service with a corporate identity all of its own (Drewry and Butcher 1991; Pyper, 1995). Warren Fisher favoured a workforce that was rounded both administratively and socially. Echoing Northcote and Trevelyan's recommendation that personnel could be transferred as and when, the need arose, Warren determined that members of his staff should have experience of working in other departments. Further he introduced the idea of staff social events e.g. through sporting and social gatherings (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). In both these respects there exists clear evidence of Warren seeking the emergence of a distinct civil service culture. To a lesser extent the legacy of organised social events and in particular, and to a greater extent, staff mobility at the Executive Officer and above grade, still remain in today's civil service. Warren was also responsible for establishing and implementing a unified and hierarchical structure that defined pay and conditions of service through a range of skill sets and grades across all government departments (see Appendix four). This common ground lent itself to sound economics that through a generalised approach then, unified recruitment processes, the grading system, work practices and operationalised an inter-changeable and mobile workforce. In short, the naïve civil service preoccupied with serving the organisational needs of royal court had travelled the distance and ever more entrenched in the processes of rationality and unification, under-pinned modern bureaucracy (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pilkington, 1999).

Bureaucracy: Toward a Generalist Approach

However the structure that evolved followed a generalist path. A generalist tradition was in the making that looked for recruitment from the liberal arts and the skills of an all rounder rather than those of a specialist. This was to have a lasting effect on the civil service and in particular, across its grading system and the duties of civil servants. This is an important point, which will be returned to which marks a step in time, and which has remained a problem in the contemporary drive toward a creative and specialist workforce. This emergence of a generalist tradition is best understood through the concept of bureaucracy.

It is widely acknowledged at the root of the organisation theory (Hall, 1999; Hatch, 1997; Watson, 2003) that Weber, in analysing the structure and processes of bureaucracy, identified the key characteristics of the corporate group and the underpinning ideal type of rational-legal authority. In distinguishing other social groups from the corporate group, Weber suggested, the corporate group was,

> 'a social relationship which is either closed or limits the admission of outsiders by rules, ... so far as its order is enforced by the action of specific individuals whose regular function this is, of a chief or 'head' and usually also an administrative staff', (Weber, 1947:145-146) engaged in 'corporate action'. (Weber, 1947: 146)

Weber (1947) determined that the ideal type of bureaucratic order relied on the observance of a legitimate authority. Legitimate authority predicated on traditional, charismatic or rational grounds. In respect of rational grounds, Weber proposed that this authority relied on the,

> 'belief in the 'legality' of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority)) (Weber, 1947:328).

Further, he proposed that,

> 'In the case of legal authority, obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order. It extends to the persons exercising the authority of office under it only by virtue of the formal legality of their commands and only within the scope of authority of the office' (Weber, 1947:328)

Weber makes the distinction between the corporate group as 'a system of (administrative) order', which 'governs corporate action' (1947:150) and an organisation which 'is a system of continuous purposive activity of a specified kind' (1947:151), whereby the latter 'is subject to a rationally established order' (1947:151). In defining ideal type bureaucracy, Weber first determines that capitalism 'has created an urgent need for stable, strict, intensive, and calculable administration' (1947:338) and as a starting point for further study (Watson, 2003), he defined the key characteristics of bureaucracy are underpinned by:

1. A 'clearly defined' hierarchical system with set objectives
2. A unified system of control that defines the structure's rules, codes of administrative practice and disciplinary procedures
3. Recruitment that is based on technical qualification, which is contractual and constitutes an individual's sole employment
4. Remuneration based on standardised pay scales that reflects the hierarchy's grade structure and which ensures pension eligibility rights
5. Opportunity to pursue a career based on a meritocratic promotion system.

In its purest sense Weber proposed that,

> 'bureaucratic administration is, other things being equal, always, from a formal, technical point of view, the most rational type. For the needs of mass administration to-day, it is completely indispensable' (1947:337).

The evolving civil service is a clear example of Weber's ideal type bureaucracy and in many respects the key features that he identified at the heart of rationalised bureaucracy echo the underpinning philosophy and practical doctrine of Northcote and Trevelyan. However, the changes established through the Civil Service Commission around open competition, a defined pay and career structure induced a an important and lasting effect that creates a tension for contemporary strategies such as HRM because in today's civil service promotion and pay increases are not time served but instead are linked to performance and performance pay. The demise of patronage and favouritism and the drive to open competition, gave way to a new breed of civil servant. Northcote and Trevelyan's project of reform supported the recruitment of young men of superior talent but underlying this was a move away from the 'enlightened gentry' and endorsement of a wider perspective that embraced a liberal arts university education (Drewry and Butcher, 1991:47; Pyper, 1995). At this time, civil service reform paralleled university reform, which was in transition toward a more general education. The consequence of this was that recruitment into the higher civil service necessarily still favoured a university educated elite but now this elite, were generalist in their approach (Drewry and Butcher, 1991).

This system was and remains at odds with other European countries whose administration relies on the expertise of specialists. Understandably the relative speed of transformation in the civil service rendered this change toward a generalist approach inevitable. Transference of power from the sovereign through to the 'lay' and 'enlightened' gentry and in particular, the rapid period of industrial expansion created the need for the formation of a centralised government and administration system (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). Not surprisingly then, the increased administrative functions generated through an enlightened and industrialised society, demanded a civil service that could respond promptly and this need favoured the generally educated man who it was considered could respond quickly and efficiently to accelerated change (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). The key exceptions to this were predictably around the periods of World Wars I and II, when general administration was necessarily supplemented by an influx of specialist personnel such as, scientists, academics and businessmen who temporarily worked alongside 'career' civil servants (Pyper, 1995).

Stepping Forward: Growing in Size

The arrival of Warren Fisher, his influence in unifying the civil service and the demands of a changing society, saw the growth of the civil service that sought to meet the demands of increased administrative functions. Between the Crimean War and the First World War, the foundation of the Welfare State was laid. Following World War II, the Welfare system was consolidated and expanded. The rise of a generalist administrative order is perhaps, best seen through its steady increase in personnel. Table 1 overleaf (cited in Drewry and Butcher, 1991) clearly illustrates the growth in civil servants between 1797 – 1989.

Table 1: Civil Servant Numbers – 1797 – 2004

Year	Number of civil servants	Year	Number of Civil Servants
1797	16,267	1901	116,413
1815	24,598	1911	172,352
1821	27,000	1914	280,900
1832	21,305	1922	317,721
1841	16,750	1939	387,400
1851	39,147	1943	710,600
1861	31,943	1950	684,800
1871	53,874	1979	732,300
1881	50.859	1986	594,400
1891	79,241	1989	569,200
For contemporary comparison the figures for 2004 are:			554,110

Source: W.J.M. Mackenzie and J.W. Grove, Central administration in Britain. (Longman, London, 1957); Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1990. Cited in Drewry & Butcher (1991:48) www.civilservice.gov.uk/management_information/

Following the Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1854), it is interesting to note that the number of civil servants fell and similarly this trend continues, following The Playfair Report (1875). However, as the process of industrial and societal change gathered momentum a steady increase in civil servants can be seen on Table 1, particularly in the periods following World Wars I and II respectively. However, as the structure of the civil service consolidated and grew during the post war year, the civil service was once again called to account in the 1960's, when it was subjected to a wide ranging review by the Fulton Committee.

Marching On: The Fulton Report

With concerns around UK economic stagnation, the Wilson Government was concerned about the civil service's ability both managerially and technically, to meet the increasing demands of the late 20th Century (Pilkington, 1999; Pyper, 1995).

Much of this criticism rested on concern around the generalist and conservative tradition, which was now firmly embedded across the civil service's management structure and its cultural ethos (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). The privileged generalist approach of the late 19th Century was now seen as an inhibiting system that remained loyal to a conservative and traditional approach that did not satisfy the demands made of an increasingly complex and technical society. The Fulton Committee (1966-68) were commissioned to investigate the civil service's structure and its internal mechanisms and in respect of efficiency and resourcefulness, its findings concurred with some of the concerns formerly raised in the Plowden Report (1961) pertain to education. The findings of the Fulton Report proved contentious across many levels. It was criticised for its narrow and superficial parameters; its over-reliance on parallels drawn with the private sector; for its opportunism in reporting what ministers wanted to hear and finally; it was accused of playing on, and, dressing up former trends as something new. Of particular, note was criticism around the language it employed, which was deemed inappropriate with particular offence being caused through its reference to civil servants as 'amateurs' (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). Overall, the report attacked the legacy of reforms introduced by Northcote and Trevelyan deeming them out of date and unsuitable for the latter part of the 20th Century (Pilkington, 1999).

In summary, the Fulton Committee recommended that:

1. Radical change was required to cope with the demands of the late 20th Century

2. Management strategy control of the civil service should be relinquished by the Treasury and assumed under the control of the Civil Service Board
3. A management training programme via a Civil Service College should be founded to equip managers with the skills needed for the success of contemporary administration
4. A review of the dominant cult of the 'amateur' generalist and the recruitment bias which favoured the Oxbridge graduate in this respect, should be reviewed and graduate entrants should be recruited in respect of degree relevance or with specialisms that met departmental requirements
5. Departments should be actively involved in the recruitment process of those individuals whose specialism satisfies specific job criteria and career prospects should be enhanced for such specialists
6. The grading system should be rationalised and recruitment methods should be reviewed and widened in order to increase recruitment catchment
7. Ministers should be allowed to appoint a small number of officials and advisers deemed as expert and necessary to policy making processes
8. Efficiency should be improved by departments reviewing and introducing modern management practices e.g. accountable management, management planning and service units
9. The operations of departments should be reviewed in order to ascertain whether some functions could be 'hived off' to other service providers e.g. through non-departmental agencies.

(Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pilkington, 1999; Pyper, 1995)

Drewry and Butcher (1991: 54) liken the Fulton Report to that of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1854, as a 'product of its time'. Despite its contentiousness in essence, the report was accepted, albeit accompanied by the criticism outlined earlier, and it generated much debate during the 1970's, but in practical terms, as political interest waned and was taken up with other more pressing matters of state, many of its recommendations remained largely unimplemented at that time although many have subsequently been implemented in later reform strategies (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pilkington, 1999; Pyper 1995).

The civil service classes that distinguished the generalist tradition remained in place but a single stem administration group was implemented that operated through open recruitment and promotion (Pilkington, 1999). The concept of new recruits holding relevant degrees was vetoed in favour of a general liberal arts degree that would support neutral administration (Dowding 1995; Pilkington, 1999). The Civil Service Department established in 1968 and later abolished in 1981, had some success in weakening the Treasury's power over civil service management and the Civil Service College was founded in 1970 although, it had limited success as most departments continued their respective 'in-house' training (Dowding 1995; Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pilkington, 1999; Pyper 1995). Following a review of departmental functions, the incoming Heath Government subsequently engaged in the process of 'hiving off' some activities and agencies such as, the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and the Property Services Agency (PSA) were established (Pilkington, 1999).

The ongoing debate around the function of the civil service continued to rumble on around what Pilkington (1999) referred to as, the three 'E's; economy, efficiency, effectiveness. Key in initially raising concerns around these characteristics was the Plowden Report (1961: Vol. 1, para. 18, cited in Drewry and Butcher, 1991:195), which particularly focussed on the lack of skilled managers, notably citing civil servants who 'think of themselves as advisers on policy to people above them, rather than as managers of the administrative machine below them'. Fulton's remedy to break down this process was for managers to become accountable. It was suggested that a system of accountable management be instigated whereby identified units of work could be defined through clear aims and objectives. It was suggested that performance of these units could then be measured rendering the manager personally accountable for the unit's outcomes and performance (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pilkington, 1999). This system further lent itself to identifying units of work, which could be 'hived off' such as the PSA and the MSC. The success of this initiative was limited under the respective Heath and returned Labour Governments and it was not until the election of the Thatcher Government in 1979, that its full effect was practically realised (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pilkington, 1999).

The Civil Service and the Thatcher Government

The Thatcher Government was elected on a manifesto that promised cuts in public expenditure caused by waste and over-bureaucratisation. At a personal level, Margaret Thatcher had a distinct distrust of the civil service based on preconceptions around its inefficiency and wastefulness together with a belief that it operated on a misguided ideology (Dowding, 1995). Thatcher's Government concurred with the Plowden Report (1961) and the Fulton Report (1968), that the civil service lacked good management skills and was too preoccupied with policymaking activity (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pilkington, 1999). Drewry and Butcher (1991:198) define 1979 as a 'turning point in the debate about efficiency and effectiveness' in the civil service. From this turning point a series of initiatives were implemented that sought to make the civil service a 'slimmer and fitter' structure.

The first steps in pursuing a slimmer organisation were the strict controls imposed around the number of civil servants. Between 1979 and 1988, the number of civil servants decreased from seven hundred and thirty two thousand to five hundred and eighty thousand, representing a reduction of twenty percent of the workforce (Drewry and Butcher, 1991:199; Pilkington, 1999). This reduction in the number of civil servants was achieved through various means. Streamlining the policy that allegedly so preoccupied the civil service effected reductions e.g. around the unnecessary collection of statistics. Further reductions were brought about by contracting out services e.g. catering, cleaning and security services and through the increased practice of 'hiving off' particular functions (Dowding, 1995; Pilkington, 1999).

However, the validity of the reported reductions was questioned and at this point it is worth noting the distinction between industrial and non-industrial civil servants. Industrial civil servants are those that often provide a practical function, e.g. drivers, mechanics etc, and are classified as distinct from those in administrative and clerical grades. During this period of downsizing, it should be noted that twenty percent reduction between 1979 and 1988 includes ninety three thousand industrial civil servants, many of whom, were attached to the Ministry of Defence (Dowding, 1995). Appendix 5, Table 5, illustrates the percentage reduction of industrial and non-industrial civil servants between 1951 – 1986. Appendix 5, Table 6, illustrates the reduction between 1979 – 1988 of industrial civil servants (Drewry and Butcher, 1991:59,199). Although industrial workers were technically no longer civil servants they often continued in the providing the same service to the civil service which raised questions around cosmetic handling and the validity of actual reductions (Dowding, 1995).

During the late 1960's and 1970's and as a result of the Plowden Report (1961) a series of Programme Analysis Reviews (PARs) focussed on the effectiveness of the civil service. However, with the advent of the Thatcher Government, through the 1980's the emphasis shifted away from effectiveness and instead focused on 'value for money' (VFM). To this end, Thatcher appointed Sir Derek Raynor (now Lord Raynor) to head up a small team who would spearhead investigations into efficiency. Scrutiny revolved around three fundamental questions; 'what is it for, what does it cost and what value does it add?' (Drewry and Butcher 1991:202). This became known as The Scrutiny Programme, the objectives of which were to:

1. scrutinise policy and question taken for granted procedural processes
2. propose and implement changes that would effect savings and increase efficiency
3. implement these changes within a 12 month period
   (Dowding 1995).

Up to 1986 Raynor effected a cumulative saving of £950 million. While this saving is considerable (Dowding, 1995) it must of course, not be seen out of context and represents a fairly modest saving in respect of the enormous cost of the civil service.

Conversely it was argued that its success should be measured more around its long-term effect in establishing an ideology of management scrutiny and accountability (Drewry and Butcher, 1991).

Various initiatives, for example, the Management Information System for Ministers (MINIS) and the Financial Management Initiative (FMI) were introduced with the intention of embedding accountable management (Dowding, 1995; Drewry and Butcher 1991). The defining characteristics of these initiatives determined that at all levels managers have:

1. Clear and measurable objectives
2. Clearly defined responsibility for providing value for money
3. Information, training and expert advice in order to assume managerial responsibility.

The Management Personnel Office (MPO) was responsible for setting up the Financial Management Unit (FMU), later known as the Joint Management Unit (JMU). This Unit was set up with the specific purpose of helping all twenty one Government Departments to consider their respective aspects of work with the overall objective of improving their financial management (Dowding 1995; Drewry and Butcher 1991). However, interestingly, because of the reported variation and uniqueness of the nature of work undertaken by the various departments this culminated in sixteen different management systems. Not only was the possibility of a unified civil service management system thwarted but, it speculatively serves to illustrate the potential for the implementation of systems that resist further inter-departmental comparison (Dowding, 1995).

During the 1980's strategic initiatives were also introduced around personnel management, these in turn, subsequently informed career management and training policy and in 1985, the first trial of performance related pay was conducted (Dowding, 1995; Drewry and Butcher, 1991). In 1983 the National Audit Act empowered the Nation Audit Office (NAO) to conduct extensive VFM audits across the civil service into 'the economy, efficiency and effectiveness' of the civil service (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). Further improvements to efficiency and effectiveness were made as the civil service embraced information technology (IT). The bi-product of this resulted in further staff savings (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). The 1980's then, was a period during which to a greater extent, refocused the 'gaze' from effectiveness to efficiency and value for money. Unlike previous attempts at bureaucratic reform, the initiatives of the 1980's were energetically driven by Margaret Thatcher. As bureaucrats became known as 'managers' and the public as 'customers', a parallel was drawn that likened the civil service to private enterprise (Drewry and Butcher, 1991). Dowding (1995:71) aptly points out that the 'next step' in the drive for efficiency and economy was 'to remove job security'.

The Next Steps Programme

Unravelling the civil service's journey of reform has been long but necessarily so. The researched department that is the focus of this thesis, as a flagship department, has been at the forefront of these changes. In particular, the process of 'hiving off' and more recently through the outcomes of the 'Next Steps Programme' has had an immense impact on its history. The Next Steps Programme was the published version of the Ibbs Report (1989), which determined that six hundred thousand civil servants rendered the civil service structure too large and diverse particularly when compared to organisations in the private sector (Pilkinton, 1999). A radical package of reforms was introduced that would resoundingly change the civil service's structure and its culture (Dowding, 1995; Drewry and Butcher, 1991). Drewry and Butcher (1991:222) highlight the words of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee who reported that the reforms of the Next Steps Programme as, 'the most far-reaching since the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms in the nineteenth century' and further, that they would, 'establish a quite different way of conducting the business of government'. Going beyond the Financial Management Initiative (FMI), the objective of this new set of reforms was to separate government administration from administrative function, which could be undertaken by semi-autonomous agencies that remained accountable to the parent department (Dowding, 1995). The parallel with private enterprise was firmly established as the company in effect, went public.

The objective then was to break up a unified civil service into a two-tier system. It was envisioned that at the core of this two-tiered model, would be twenty thousand civil servants who served ministers and would be responsible for policy-making. This small core included the Treasury who would remain accountable for all pay and personnel matters (Pilkington, 1999:75). The other tier, although still accountable to Parliament, would be responsible for implementing policy (Pilkington, 1999). This latter tier's work activities, would through a process of market evaluation, be subject to scrutiny and potential 'hiving off' to semi-autonomous agencies (Dowding, 1995;

Pilkington, 1999). The process of market evaluation in scrutinising functional activities, relied on the following criteria:

1. The activity needs to remain with the government department
2. The activity can best be managed outside the control of a civil service department and should be located either with a private supplier or a quango (a non-government organisation)
3. The activity should be managed outside the civil service but controlled by the government (Pilkington, 1999).

Chief Executives were appointed to head up these agencies and were responsible for negotiating a 'Framework Agreement' with the parent department for which measurable 'performance indicators' were determined (Dowding, 1995). While some of the staff in these agencies would remain civil servants others would not. Effectively Northcote-Trevelyan's vision of a unified civil service with common conditions of service was at an end. These agencies would go on to exercise their autonomy by introducing their own grade system, pay scales and so on, albeit those remaining within the civil service had first to agree these with the Treasury.

The Next Steps Programme got off to a slow start. In total twelve candidates for agency status were identified which equated to seventy thousand civil servants, albeit thirty five thousand of these were made up by the Employment Service Agency (ESA) (Pilkington, 1999:78). In rebuffing criticism it was predicted that within ten years, three quarters of civil servants would be employed within new agencies. The 1992 election of the Major Government saw significant progress in achieving this prediction. By 1998, seventy six percent i.e., three hundred and eighty thousand civil servants were located within agencies (Pilkington, 1999:78,81). The Major Government quickly induced a shake up that established the new Office of Public Service and Science, which became responsible for the Next Steps Programme. This new office alongside the introduction of the Citizen's Charter set out to ensure public satisfaction with the delivery of public services. In 1991, the White Paper, 'Competing for Quality', introduced the process of 'market testing' (Pilkington, 1999). The process of market testing identified functional activities that could be streamlined and offered out for tender, both to in-house and outside competitors. This was a two pronged initiative that not only tested activities around their potential for outside provision but the process in itself promoted 'good housekeeping', the outcome of which ensured vigilant in-house scrutiny and generally improved efficiency (Dowding, 1995; Pilkington, 1999).

The underpinning drive for these initiatives was around value for money but figures around staff savings brought forward the criticism suggested that such initiatives were simply a smokescreen for masking cuts. By 1993, three hundred and eighty nine market tests had materialised in staff cuts of twenty two percent (Pilkington, 1999:79). 'By October, 1994, £2.1 billion worth of activities had been considered', many of these activities had been contracted out with a loss of twenty seven thousand staff (Pilkington, 1999:79). The Major Government continued this programme of change with the introduction in 1992 of Private Funded Initiatives (PFI). This initiative invited private enterprise to fund public projects, examples of this include the building of the bridge between Skye and the mainland and the M6 relief road to the east of Birmingham. This reform initiative serves to highlight the increasing crossover and penetration between the private and the public spheres (Pilkington, 1999).

In 1993, the Prior Options Initiative was launched which determined that the agencies created by the Next Steps Programme would review their activities on a five-year basis. Agencies became responsible for reviewing the continuation of formerly agreed activities using the following criteria,

1. An activity was no longer necessary and should be abolished
2. An activity was still required and should be overseen by a government department
3. An activity was still required but should be market tested for contracting out
4. An activity was still required but would be better placed if delivered privately and outside government control (Pilkington, 1999).

Undoubtedly the Next Steps Programme brought about enormous change to the civil service both structurally and functionally but criticism of its reform necessarily continued. The Prior Options initiative highlights that the process of devolving activities to agencies did not mean that the programme of reform in the civil service or its agencies, stood still. However, the Next Steps Programme highlighted a disparity in the skills and conditions of service, between senior civil servants and the agency chief executives and it was to this issue that the gaze of reform now turned.

Stepping Up – The View from the Top

Agency chief executives were recruited and paid in line with private enterprise, while senior civil servants (SCSs) were bound into the fixed pay structure of the civil service (Pilkington, 1999). Further, chief executives presented a new breed of 'managers' with different skills to the SCSs and in 1992, the Head of the Civil Service, Sir Robin Butler, commissioned an investigation into the recruitment of SCSs (Pilkington, 1999). Pilkington (1999:91) notes that the subsequent Oughton Report (1993) suggested an underlying implication that,

> 'senior civil servants were intellectual dinosaurs, unaware of the 'real world' and disguising their general ignorance through the use of pedantic and academic language'.

Ironically Fulton's (1968) concern around the Northcote-Trevelyan (1854) tradition of recruiting graduates with a general degree, yet again seems to ring true through the above observed implication. The Oughton Report (1993) suggested a 'leaner and flatter' management structure that recruited high-flying SCSs on fixed but explicit contracts for which remuneration should be flexible and performance-related. In the White Paper, 'Continuity and Change' (1994), the process of reform rolled on and further staff cuts were required in order to take the number of civil servants below five hundred thousand. Further, a 'leaner and fitter' structure across the civil service was to be achieved through the eradication of unnecessary layers of management (Pilkington, 1999). The intention of this was not only to reduce numbers but of course to improve efficiency and speed up decision-making processes. Importantly a new broader senior management structure was to be introduced that included agency chief executives and which sought to recruit talented ‘high-flyers’ from industry and commerce. In 1995, the White Paper, ‘Taking Forward Continuity and Change’, progressed Oughton’s recommendation and the Open Structure of senior officials was replaced through the establishment of a Senior Civil Service in 1996 (Pilkington, 1999; www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform/documents/delivery.values.pdf Jan 2005). In 1997, Dr David Clark announced that the ‘agency creation phase of the Next Steps policy’ would be closed off and a new phase that focussed on performance would be launched (Pilkington, 1999:99).

The Contemporary Civil Service

In 1999, the Blair Government launched its reform initiative, ‘Modernising Government’. The aim of this White Paper had three overarching key aims around,

1. Strategic policy making
2. Focusing on public service users, rather than the providers
3. High quality and efficient public services.

(‘Civil Service Reform; Delivery and Values’ Report (2004:pg 7,1.10)
www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform/documents/delivery.values.pdf Jan 2005).

In 1998 Tony Blair in a conference speech set out seven challenges for the civil service, that would later inform the 1999 ‘Modernising Government’, White Paper. These challenges were formalised as follows:

1. Implementing constitutional reform in a way that preserves a unified civil service and ensures close working between the UK government and the devolved administrations.
2. Getting staff in all Departments to integrate the EU dimension into policy thinking.
3. Focusing work on public services so as to improve their quality, make them more innovative and responsive to users and ensure that they are delivered in an efficient and joined up way.
4. Creating a more innovative and less risk-averse culture in the civil service.
5. Improving collaborative working across organisational boundaries.
6. Managing the civil service so as to equip it to meet these challenges.
7. Thinking ahead strategically to future priorities.

('Modernising Government', (1999): Chap 6, pg 3 http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document.cm43/4310/4310-sm.htm accessed 24/01/05)

While this new initiative seeks to 'modernise' government it acknowledges this as a 'long term programme of improvement'. The key aim within is the ongoing programme of reform to public services offered through the civil service and its agencies. This initiative recognises that previous reform has focused more recently on efficiency and is critical of the adverse affect this has had on civil service. It states that,

> 'Public service has for too long been neglected, undervalued and denigrated. It has suffered from a perception that the private sector was always best and

the public sector was always inefficient. The Government rejects these prejudices. But their legacy remains'

('Modernising Government', (1999): Chap 6, pg 1 http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document.cm43/4310/4310-sm.htm accessed 24/01/05)

In February 2004, Blair delivered the opening speech at an event, which launched Sir Andrew Turnbull's report on 'Civil Service Reform: Delivery and Values' (2004). In a speech that commended the civil service and recognised the frustration of its denigrated reputation, Blair acknowledged positively the legacy of Northcote and Trevelyan, endorsing the tradition of a unified, permanent, impartial and effective base on which the civil service is founded. He said,

'For the British people a civil service, and the duty of any government, is to leave it in better shape than we found it and, as far as possible, prepared to meet whatever challenges the future may bring.

Turnbull's (2004:5) report, which is, 'still based on the enduring values of an independent and impartial civil service', determines how the increasing demand of public administration will be effected alongside the project of modernising government. The impact of the recommended reforms fall across five key outcome areas. These are included because later in this thesis the Department's success in communicating these to Divisional participants via its HRM strategy will be analysed. Therefore in the interests of comprehensiveness and later reference, the five key outcomes are reproduced in full as follows,

1. **Civil servants** being recruited from various backgrounds, at different career stages, given better development opportunities, under more rigorous performance management, with senior postings normally limited to four years, and with progress being dependent on meeting skills and experience requirements at key 'career gateways'.
2. **Professionalism** becoming a defining characteristic for policy makers and operational staff as much as for specialists, supported by a principle of developing skills and experience around revived 'career anchors'.
3. **Departments** leading public service delivery on the basis of well developed strategies to deliver clear outcomes, supported by much better corporate functions in financial management, HR, IT etc.
4. **The centre** providing a focus for excellence in key corporate disciplines needed by departments, and providing a robust internal challenge on delivery and effectiveness.
5. **Efficiency** underpinning everything as a constant process of review and challenge, to make sure that departments do what only they should do.

('Civil Service Reform; Delivery and Values Report' (2004:5) www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform/documents/delivery.values.pdf Jan 2005).

The emergence of a naïve civil service has travelled the distance through to the contemporary structure that wrestles with reform. While incoming governments capitalise on the changes and staff cuts made, by their predecessors, it does so with a continued mission that necessarily pursues the project of reform. Turnbull (2004:7) points out that the civil service enjoys a 'highly regarded' worldwide reputation, with a 97.9% percentile ranking in respect of its effectiveness across the top ten GDP countries. The Labour Government's reform would seem intent on capitalising on the tradition and reputation of an established and unified civil service but with a shift in emphasis that moves away from economy and efficiency and instead refocuses on improving the *quality* of service offered.

This chapter has coursed the emergence and history of the civil service through the continual process of reform and the progression of change. There exists a unique civil service culture that is steeped in its history and in particular, shaped by the processes of its reform. This culture is not simply one that revolves around its structure and policy but is built up through the agency and interactions of its members in responding to it as a structure with a very distinct and accountable function to the public and the service it provides. The Turnbull Report (2004:7) proposes that the delivery of public service will be supported through 'well developed strategies' and 'corporate functions'. It is to one of these strategies that the following Chapter turns in order to understand how organisation change is effected and communicated through HRM. But first, the researched department needs to be located and contextualised within the civil service.

The Department

The researched department has chosen to remain anonymous and here after, will be known as the 'Department'. This makes charting its history somewhat difficult. It is a large Department, which has in some form or another been in existence for over a hundred years providing key services direct to the public throughout that time. The research conducted was carried out in a Division of the Department and at one of its three Headquarter Sites. This site was established in the 1960s and since that time has practically implemented policy through support services to a large network of frontline sites that deal with members of the public on a face-to-face basis.

To protect its anonymity details have been disguised and marginally distorted and should be taken as an approximation where indicated. For example, The Department has changed its name on approximately eight to ten occasions and along with these changes have been changes to work responsibilities. The Department and its work objectives and responsibilities bear little resemblance to those of fifteen years ago. At that time its workforce was over sixty thousand strong, as a 'parent' department, this latterly included affiliation to several large agencies. As a result of market testing the Department's workforce was substantially reduced through the process of 'hiving off' or voluntary redundancy packages. This was particularly true of the researched Headquarter Site where the workforce fell from approximately two thousand to around six hundred.

The Department has a history then of change and in particular, mergers with other government departments (OGDs). In the 1990s the Department merged with a smaller department and since that time its original function has been devolved and merged with other OGDs. The outcome of this is that today, it continues to provide the support services to a wide network of offices, but the Department's original function that predominated work at the Headquarter Site has largely disappeared through the process of devolvement. Nevertheless, its working ethos and culture of support remains. The reputation and skills formerly attached to a 'flagship' Department and in particular, the skills accredited to its workforce particularly in the Headquarter Sites have served to benefit the smaller department that it merged with several years ago. In short then, the workforce at the Headquarter Site still provides key support services but through a radically different set of Departmental aims and objectives. In other words this merger is a distinct coming together of two very different departmental cultures, which will be identified in subsequent chapters.

The overall number of number of civil servants employed at 1 April 2003 represents just under, two percent of the UK's workforce (reported as thirty million at June 2003).

Table 2 below illustrates the number of civil servants employed in a permanent and casual capacity. (Appendix 6 Table 7 details general staffing trends 1994- 2004)

Table 2

Staff in Post (Full-time Equivalent)					
	Permanent Non-Industrial Staff	**Permanent Industrial Staff**	**Permanent Total**	**Casual Staff**	**Total number of permanent and casual civil servants**
1/4/2003	491,300	21,110	512,410	9, 640	522,050

The Department's Division is based in the North West of England where in 2003, 11.8% (1997, 11.6%) of the civil service are located. Published employment statistics for the Department at 1st April 2003, reported that fewer than six thousand permanent staff were employed, one thousand of whom were engaged in a part-time capacity. A further one hundred casual staff were recruited largely on a full time basis. In comparison to statistics published between 1997 – 2003, the Department's staff has increased by around five hundred over the past seven years. This is probably indicative of the Government's emphasis on the service this Department now offers the public.

(all statistics extracted from (19/1/05): http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/management_information/statistical_information/statistics/contents_for_civil_service_statistics_2003_report/index.asp).

The Department and the researched Division then, have experienced immense change over the last decade and it is important to recognise that the Division once played a key role in a much larger Department. However, the Headquarters Site continues in its support role and is often referred to by the researched cohort as a 'clerical factory', in other words it is used to producing systems that implement government policy. In merging with a smaller department the skills associated with a 'flagship' department have served in a mentoring role to modernise the incoming department and its workload. As a 'flagship' department, formerly it was at the edge of change and necessarily has been caught up in the process of reform. Some of the participants in this research have worked at this Headquarter Site since the 1960's and therefore have been affected by some of the changes identified through this Chapter e.g. from the Fulton Report (1968) onwards. As later chapters will indicate to varying extents these changes remain embedded within its working culture. However, before unpacking this further the following Chapter will consider HRM as a management strategy before going on to contextualise its implementation within the Department.

Chapter 4

HRM: A Force for Change......?

A Person Centred Approach

The Human Relations Approach was briefly introduced in the introduction, this chapter will now consider it in more detail, first by looking at its origins, its relationship to psychological humanism and then through its practical application in managing humans as a resource. As a strategy HRM will be considered as a mechanism for effecting or 'engineering' organisational cultural change.

Contextualising The Human Relations Approach

In response to the rapid acceleration of industrialisation, the classical approach of management determined that the economic effectiveness of an organisation could be managed through the scientific principles of Taylorism and the management principles of Fayolism (Taylor, 1947; Fayol 1949; Burnes, 2000). Scientific management adopted a mechanistic approach that distinguished the role of management to that of a subordinate work force (Taylor, 1947; Burnes, 2000; Watson, 2003). The prime assumption of this approach was that the workforce was driven by an individualistic and instrumental desire for financial recompense. Conversely the Human Relations (HR) approach to management resituates the worker as a valuable resource that has other intrinsic needs beyond financial gain, for example, job satisfaction (Burnes, 2000; Watson, 2003). Theoretically through this approach, it is by harnessing and accommodating these needs that the workforce and the management can work in partnership in order to effect and realise an organisation's full potential.

Origins

In origin, Burnes (2000) suggests that the HR approach can be traced back to two sources. The first relates to work conducted around concerns of worker fatigue during World War I, while in the USA, the second focus was on worker motivation and employee selection (Burnes, 2000). Studies continued during the 1920's and 1930's through the work of CS Myers who in the UK focused on industrial psychology and Elton Mayo in the USA (Burnes, 2000). By and large, it is with Mayo that the approach tends to be associated (Burnes, 2000; Hatch, 1997; Mullins, 2002; Watson, 2003). Mayo famously conducted a series of studies at the Western Electric Company at the Hawthorne Works in Chicago. Over two phases, worker motivation was tested through the manipulation of workplace variables (Mayo, 1949). In Phase 1, worker productivity was measured in respect of workplace lighting levels. Despite changes to lighting levels, unexpectedly productivity increased due to being observed (Mayo, 1949; Burnes 2000). Exceptionally the only decrease monitored was when lighting was so poor that workers could not physically see in order to carry out their activities (Burnes, 2000). In Phase 2, Mayo introduced a number of variables that improved worker conditions, for example, extended rest periods, free refreshments and friendly communications with managers etc. Enhancing the material conditions and social relations of the workplace, in effect, privileged some workers over others which perhaps understandably, had the effect of, raising morale, motivation and enhancing productivity (Mayo, 1949; Burnes, 2000). This became known as the 'Hawthorne

Effect' and its methodology has since attracted some criticism, in respect of Mayo's findings (Burnes, 2000; Thompson and McHugh, 2002; Hogg and Vaughan, 2002). Mayo concluded two key points that underpin the HR approach,

1. That workers in formal structures need to be engaged in collective activity through the establishment of informal groups
2. That workers have a deep-seated need to belong, feel secure and their efforts to be recognised (Burnes, 2000).

However, while these conclusions may be valid to some extent, psychological explanation goes further still in explanation of the Mayo's findings. Singling these workers out for special treatment together with their awareness of being monitored is in itself likely to have been a significant contributory factor. In familiar situations the 'mere presence' of an observer can induce a process of 'social facilitation' (Allport, 1920) causing an 'audience effect' (Triplett, 1898) which in practised situations can result in positive enhancement. In this instance then, it is likely to have increased performance. However, it is fair to say that such effects obviously apply generally across group working. Misery can breed misery and therefore, the reverse audience effect can also be socially facilitated. In this respect it calls into question the 'Hawthorne Effect' because Mayo's cohort were clearly aware of being monitored and that this would have made a significant difference.

Burnes (2000) points out that Mayo's key points, that workers need to be engaged in collective activity and need to belong, were also identified by Taylor. However, Taylor considered these characteristics were manifested through abnormal behaviour;

behaviour that on an individual basis be controlled through scientific management and instrumental reward. Conversely, Mayo recognised the importance of group activity and belonging. Further, he proposed that this, alongside the need to feel secure and to have work efforts recognised, underpinned and affected a rise in worker morale and motivation (Burnes, 2000). Drawing on Durkheim's (1933; 1984) work, he proposed that in identifying the social and psychological needs of workers, an increase in morale, functionally served to enhance co-operative social relations, which worked to the benefit of the organism (or organisation) as a whole (Mayo, 1949). Burnes (2000:62) makes the point that where the classical approach identified the 'economic man', the HR approach engages with the 'social man'. Thompson and McHugh (2002) make the point that not only did Mayo's work have a significant impact in the ways in which personnel were subsequently managed but it also brought together theorists from the disciplines of anthropology, psychology and of course, sociology. In this respect it affirmed what they describe as a 'formal arrangement' between social science and industry (Thompson and McHugh, 2002:45).

Another key influence in the HR approach was Chester Barnard. Barnard emphasised the co-operative nature and social systems within organisation (Hatch, 1997; Burnes, 2000; Thompson and McHugh, 2002). In this respect, Burnes (2000:62-63) identifies him with a 'double claim to fame' in respect of both the HR approach and the 'systems' approach. Barnard determined that the co-operative nature of organisations was made up of social systems and underpinned by effective communication. While the organisation was a rational entity, he concurred with Mayo that individuals were not (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). He designated the responsibility for harnessing this potential irrationality lay with managers who needed to set clear parameters around organisational objectives and goals (Burnes, 2000; Hatch, 997; Thompson and McHugh, 2002). While he determined that this purposeful activity emanated from the top, successful implementation relied on the co-operation of organisational members at all levels but in particular, those at the bottom of a structure. Without this support an effective system of communication and authority would break down therefore, effective motivational leadership was essential (Burnes, 2000; Hatch, 1997). In this respect, Burnes (2000) makes the point, that there is overlap here with the Classical Approach of Scientific Management, but what distinguishes it is Barnard's premise that organisational life is predicated on assumptions around the interplay of the informal, moral and non-rational social relations that reach across layers of management and workforce. In other words, the social interaction, context and moral framework that today we associate with organisational culture.

The underpinning foundation and transition to the HR approach then fundamentally introduced the 'social' into organisational analysis and in this respect, Thompson and McHugh, (2002) make a relevant point that in many respects the appeal of the HR approach lies in its ideological approach. Formerly, the classical approach assumed that workers were driven solely through self-interest and as such, that organisations as mechanistic structures could likewise be rationally managed. To contrast the HR approach from the classical tradition, Burnes determines that HR considers,

1. 'People are emotional rather than economic–rational beings.
2. Organisations are co-operative, social systems rather than mechanical ones
3. Organisations are composed of informal structures, rules and norms as well as formal practices and procedures' (Burnes, 2000:58).

Classical thought assumed a relatively negative view of the human condition whereas the HR approach holds more potential for an optimistic outlook around individual needs and motivation. As an ideological approach it is through the successive theories and strategies that its influence bears legacy. For example, McGregor suggested that two opposing stances existed which he conceptualised as 'Theory X-Theory Y'. Theory X supposes that individuals dislike and seek to avoid work, lack ambition preferring to follow instructions rather than taking responsibility and that as a consequence the role of management is to control and coerce (Burnes, 2000; Hatch, 1997). Conversely Theory Y positively assumes that individuals naturally engage with work, are 'capable of exercising self-direction and self-control' and when motivated and committed can demonstrate creative and abstract thought normally attributed to managerial roles (Burnes, 2000:67). This model demonstrates the binary opposition between the classical and HR approaches to management. While sociologically the former focuses on structure, the latter emphasises the role of agents working within and constructing structures. Contemporarily, we would locate this as understanding the interplay between structure and the social processes that inform culture and vice versa.

HR: An Unfolding Approach

However, like classical theory before it, the HR approach similarly attracted criticism. During the 1950's and 1960's general criticism highlighted HR as based on irrational assumptions that undermined the individual's desires for material incentives (Burnes, 2000; Watson, 2003). Further, that HR was too preoccupied with its emphasis around informal arrangements and a drive to understand the psychological and social needs of organisational members (Brooks, 2003; Burnes 2000). As an approach the legacy of founding HR thought lies in its influence of implementing management strategies around leadership and motivation, strategies that recognised humans as potential resources in optimising organisational performance (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). As such then it is a philosophy that recognises the human condition as essentially irrational and reliant on emotion and sentiment (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). In many respects then, there is commonality between the HR approach and Fayolism. While Fayolism determined a set of management principles, the HR approach takes this one step further through its recognition of the affective nature of humans and therein the potential for this to be harnessed through the implementation of management strategies.

Thompson and McHugh (2002) make the point that the HR approach placed emphasis on managing the values in organisation. The appeal of HR through the 1950's and 1960's lay in its ideological emphasis around managing values, valuing individuals as creative social agents who, as a valuable resource, could be managed through their needs (Burnes, 2000; Hatch, 1999; Thompson and Hatch, 2002). It is not surprising then, that Maslow's (1943) theory of self-actualisation was appropriated within the HR approach during this period (Burnes, 2000; Gabriel, Fineman and Sims, 1992). Maslow's theory differentiated needs still further, between essential survival and safety needs, for example, food, shelter etc, from psychological and social needs, for example, learning, empowerment, companionship and so on (Maslow, 1943, Gabriel, Fineman and Sims, 1992; Mullins, 2002). Maslow's hierarchy of needs placed the individual centre stage still further and was the driving force of the HR approach in the field of 'Organisational Behaviour' (Gabriel, Fineman and Sims, 1992; Mullins, 2002).

What becomes significant is the cross-disciplinary fertilisation of theories and the ease with which they are appropriated within respective disciplines is indicative of global paradigm shifts. In itself as a contemporary antidote to mechanistic approaches of management, the HR approach is illustrative of such development. However, a key criticism of both the Classical and HR Approaches was the emphasis each placed on a 'one best way' approach to management (Burnes, 2000; Mullins, 2002; Thompson and McHugh, 2002). Neither approach recognised situational variables and into this breach stepped Contingency Theory (Burnes, 2000; Hatch, 1999; Thompson and McHugh, 2002). This approach rejects grand narrative and instead advocates that organisations are unique to their environment, size and technology, and because of this a 'one best way' cannot account for the differences across organisations (Burnes, 2000; Collins, 1998; Hatch, 1997; Mullins, 2002). Instead, this approach suggests that there is a 'one best way' for *each* organisation depending on the situational variables of its external and internal environment (Burnes, 2000; Mullins, 2002). Contingency theory draws on a 'systems' approach which conceptualises the organisation as an open system made up of component parts or 'subsystems' rooted in both its external and internal environments (Brooks, 2003; Hatch 1997; Mullins, 2002). This theory suggests that these subsystems come together to form an inter-related complex network that goes beyond the social and human element to include, an organisation's structure, size, economic base, information and decision making processes and, its technology (Brooks, 2003, Mullins, 2002). As an approach it thrived through the 1960's and 1970's and was more flexible around its understanding of change in society and the economy.

Criticism of contingency theory recognises that its emphasis lies with rationalising the contingent factors that make up and formalise an organisation's structure (Brooks, 2003; Burnes, 2000; Hatch, 1997). However, preoccupied with rationalising situational variables, it does not address issues of a more practical nature around internal planning, implementation of change and, performance (Burnes, 2000; Brooks, 2003; Thompson and McHugh, 2002). The contingency approach ignores the complexity of organisational life and assumes implicit understanding of organisational objectives and goals. This trail of rational thought ignores then, the HR emphasis on the informal arrangements in organisations, for example, specific objective and goal setting, clear channels of communication and effective leadership (Burnes, 2000).

A legacy from each of these theories can be identified to a great or lesser extent in the civil service's history and programme of reform. As a strategy of management, further discussion of HRM will follow. However, as an approach to management, contingency theory or at least the idea of bureaucracy as made up of a system with interacting subsystems will become relevant in later analysis and through the 'voices' of the civil servants who took part in this research.

Introducing Human Resource Management

What we know today as HRM formerly tended to be commonly referred to as Personnel Management (Legge, 1995; Mabey, Salaman and Storey, 1998). Legge (1995) identifies that its rise in popularity and implementation came about in the 1980's through concerns around economic recession and increased competition from Japan. In the West, organisations were encouraged to copy the Japanese style of management (Watson, 2003). The process of Japanisation embraced a range of work practices that promoted 'flexible production and quality management' through, for example the practice of team working (Watson, 2003:109). Drawing on the words of Sisson, (1993), Watson, summed up the aims of this process as,

1. the 'development of a highly committed and adaptable workforce willing and able to learn new skills and take on new tasks'
2. the elevation of 'the management of people' to a strategic level of organisational decision-making
3. an emphasis on trust rather than rules and procedures
4. the encouragement of managers to become leaders and facilitators of cultural change by 'harnessing the co-operation and commitment of others'
5. the move away from hierarchical organisations with a number of tiers of management, separate functions and tightly defined job descriptions to much 'flatter' and more 'federal' organisation
6. an emphasis on the flexibility of function, task, time and reward and on team working and 'single status' terms and conditions of employment (2003:109).

This process of Japanisation then, places emphasis on valuing and being flexible with the workforce. The premise being that investing in the workforce as a human resource evokes and ensures commitment which in turn underpins an organisation's success in meeting business objectives (Legge, 1995; Mabey, Salaman and Storey,1998; Watson, 2003). Watson (2003) identifies two ideal types that apply to HRM strategy; high commitment and low commitment. In respect of high commitment as an ideal type he suggests that,

> 'Employers seek a close relationship with workers who become psychologically or emotionally involved with the enterprise. Opportunities for personal and career development are built into people's employment, which is expected to continue over a longer-term period and potentially to cover a variety of tasks', in this typology, 'workers are given discretion about how tasks are carried out' (Watson, 2003:109).

Conversely, in a low commitment type,

> 'Employers acquire it (commitment) at the point when it is immediately needed. Workers are allocated to tasks for which they need very little training, with the employment being terminated as soon as those tasks have been completed. The organisation-worker relationship is an 'arm's-length' and calculatingly instrumental one', in this typology, 'work tasks are closely supervised and monitored' (Watson, 2003:109).

The determinant factor then, depends on the type of work being undertaken and the level of skill needed. As the process of Japanisation took hold, the 1980's saw organisations embracing HRM in various forms as a management strategy (Legge, 1995; Mabey, Salaman and Storey, 1998; Watson, 2003). However, this evoked criticism around how HRM was distinguishable from personnel management. Mullins (2002:685) drawing on the work of Guest (1987) distinguished HRM as different to personnel management, based on defining characteristics of;

1. 'a long-term rather than a short-term perspective
2. the psychological contract based on commitment rather than compliance
3. self-control rather than external controls
4. a unitarian rather than a pluralist perspective
5. an organic rather than a bureaucratic structure
6. integration with line management rather than specialist or professional roles
7. maximum utilisation rather than cost-minimisation'.

Meanwhile, Storey, (1993) identified twenty-seven points of difference across HRM, which fall under the general headings of; beliefs and assumptions; strategic aspects, for example, customer orientation; line managers and key levers, for example, increased flow in communication. Distinguishing HRM from personnel management, Mullins (2002:685) suggests that a key difference is that personnel management is not directly involved in management but instead, is 'workforce centred' with its main function in supporting people who work within an organisation. Conversely, HRM is strategic or 'resource-centred', focusing on managerial needs in accomplishing organisational objectives, with a 'preferred focus on individual rather than collective relations' (Mullins, 2002:685).

Mabey, Salaman and Storey (1998:37) point out that many elements within HRM are not new but simply a fusing together of ideas and practices that 'wrap around' and explain organisational change. Its power lies in formulating a package of both old and new elements that strategically support business and management objectives (Mabey, Salaman and Storey, 1998). In itself, defining HRM as Legge (1995) points out, is very difficult. Legge (1995:3) defines a normative model of personnel management as 'the optimum utilisation of human resources in pursuit of organisational goals'. In respect of a normative model of HRM she draws on the work of Guest (1987) who identifies 'the main dimensions of HRM' as involving,

1. 'The goal of integration (i.e., if human resources can be integrated into strategic plan, if human resource policies cohere, if line managers have internalised the importance of human resources and this is reflected in their behaviour and if employees identify with the company, then the company's strategic plans are likely to be more successfully implemented, the goal),
2. the goal of employee commitment,
3. the goal of flexibility/adaptability (i.e., organic structures, functional flexibility),
3. the goal of quality (i.e., quality of staff, performance, standards and public image)' (1995:65).

This illustrates a marked difference between a normative model of personnel management with that of HRM, which is clearly far more exacting around personnel practices and importantly, the processes that need to be triggered in order to meet the overall organisation's business objectives. However, the exacting nature of such a definition serves to highlight Mabey, Salaman and Storey's (1998) point that organisations negotiate a minefield in reconfiguring or fusing together, both old and new elements of personnel management and HRM. As a consequence, it is perhaps not surprising that organisations implement HRM in different guises (Storey and Sisson, 1993).

However, two models of HRM are generally identified; a 'hard' model and a 'soft' model (Dickens, 1998; Legge, 1995; Mabey, Salaman and Storey, 1998; Truss, 1999). These two models are also assumed to be diametrically opposed, the hard model is defined as a *utilitarian-instrumental* approach while the soft model is defined as *developmental-humanist* (Legge, 1995; Truss, 1999).

A 'Hard' Model of HRM

The emphasis on a hard model of HRM strategically sets out to integrate the 'human resource policies, systems, and activities' of an organisation specifically and calculatively in order to fulfil its business strategy (Dickens, 1998; Legge, 1995:66; Mabey, Salaman and Storey,1998). The emphasis is on solid integration. It is not sufficient that an organisation's systems, policies and activities are complementary, but are instrumental in ensuring a cohesiveness that drives the business strategy. The focus is on measuring and quantifying business outcomes and within, people are rendered as necessary resources in effecting the business objectives (Legge, 1995).

This model then, can be summarised as a utilitarian instrumentalist approach that rationally sets out to achieve the business strategy through the control of a compliant and passive workforce (Dickens, 1998; Legge, 1995). Drawing on Watson's (2003) earlier typology this seems to lean toward then, a low commitment strategy. In this respect the hard model of HRM tends to be associated with the manufacturing industry (Watson, 2003; Dickens, 1998).

A 'Soft' Model of HRM

In direct opposition the soft model of HRM takes a humanist approach that values employees as valuable assets instrumental in achieving an organisation's success (Legge, 1995; Mabey, Salaman and Storey,1998). This approach recognises the skills, the quality output and commitment of workers as competitively advantageous (Legge, 1995). In this instance, organisations invest in nurturing and developing worker adaptability and commitment through collaborative opportunities in which workers are encouraged to creatively and proactively engage in an organisation's activities and processes (Dickens, 1998, Legge, 1995). In many respects the soft model of HRM humanistically revolves around processes of transformation, for example, through empowerment and trust. This model can be firmly located in Watson's (2003) high commitment typology as person-centred.

Both models advocate the importance of integrating an organisation's policies, systems and activities, but in the hard model of HRM, humans are determined as an economic resource. Whereas in the soft model of HRM, Legge (1995) makes the distinction that the focus is around developing a 'resourceful' or skilled workforce that are committed to creatively, flexibly and collaboratively engaging with the challenges of achieving an organisation's goals and business objectives. The underlying mechanisms, which trigger and drive the required level of commitment are facilitated through the processes of effective communication and motivational leadership. Legge (1995) makes the point that neither model is exclusive in its respective composition and there is much overlap. Instead the determining factor in how, or the degree to which, organisations implement HRM as a strategy depends on the type of business or activity an organisation is engaged in. To a large extent then, this takes us full circle back to Watson's (2003) ideal typology around level of commitment in respect of the skills and type of work with which an organisation engages.

HRM - Interacting Processes

In response then, to changing economic and global markets, the practice of implementing HRM as a strategy for change that enhances organisational performance, is now firmly established (Collins, 1998; Legge, 1995; Mabey, Salaman and Storey, 1998). Two models of HRM have been identified, the next important aspect to consider are how their respective characteristics are strategically integrated through an organisation's policies, systems and activities and in respect of this study, through the social everyday practices of organisational members. Dickens (1998:23) conceptualises HRM as a set of policies, which strive for organisational coherence through 'strategic integration, flexibility, quality and commitment'.

The underlying mechanism in achieving this would first suggest an organisation must possess effective communication policies and practices. Mullins (2002:687) draws attention to the point that increasingly organisations are referring to 'people management' or 'management of people' rather than the impersonal reference to people as 'resources' that just happen to be human. This seems to reinstate, the 'human' in the HR approach, in that it recognises humans as capable of thoughts, feelings and perceptions. Clearly these are all characteristics that inform organisational culture, the potential for cultural change and importantly, in meeting the HRM objectives of organisational success and commitment.

In order to integrate an organisation's policies, Mullins (2002:688) suggests that these must emanate from the top and should be founded on 'underlying philosophies of managerial behaviour and employee relationships'. He suggests that these philosophies should embrace,

1. The recognition of people's needs and expectations at work
2. Respect for the individual
3. Justice in treatment and equitable reward systems
4. Stability of employment
5. Good working environment and conditions of service
6. Opportunities for personal development and career progression
7. Democratic functioning of the organisation and
8. Full observance of all laws and codes of conduct relating to employment' (2002:688).

Mullins (2002) emphasises that while policy and the underlying philosophies of managerial behaviour and employee relationships emanate from the top, the smooth implementation of HR strategies are a shared responsibility. Particular emphasis is placed on line managers in not only ensuring the smooth day-to-day running of operational objectives but also, on personnel related relations. In this respect, Mullins (2002:691) also suggests that 'line managers are their own human resource managers'. However, the notion of a shared responsibility goes beyond the various layers of management and organisational commitment is a key tenet within HRM affecting workers at all levels (Dickens, 1998; Legge, 1995; Mullins, 2002). Dickens (1998:24) suggests that

> 'attitudinal and behavioural commitment are sought to help enhance job performance and to limit turnover, justifying investment in high quality, highly trained, flexible employees'.

Further she suggests that commitment is enhanced through 'scope for responsibility and self expression' (Dickens, 1998:24). Organisational commitment is then, more likely to be effected through the socialising processes around job opportunity and job satisfaction. Here we have then two generally accepted models of HRM, a 'hard' model and a 'soft' model.

Binary opposition seems then, clearly defined, however, in practical application the boundary between the two would seem blurred. In candid terms it is not necessarily in an organisation's interests to publicise its identification and implementation of a 'hard' model of HRM that seeks to maximise production and profit potentially at the expense of its work force. It is far easier to promote a 'soft' model of HRM that has an inclusive discourse of humans as resources who have opportunity to maximise their potential and make a valuable contribution to an organisation.

HRM: Strategy and Strategic Management

HRM as a strategy is not always immediately apparent in an organisation; its boundaries can be blurred and subsumed within its mission statement, goals, aims etc. As discussed earlier, the boundaries are debateable around the difference between the HR approach, personnel management and HRM, however, to progress this one step further there exists a difference between HRM as a strategy and strategic HRM. The former relates to a common way of working around values, expectations, commitment etc, whereas the strategic HRM is a considered way of managing (Legge, 1995; Mabey, Salaman and Storey, 1998). To take a strategic approach to managing could of course, result in either a 'hard' or 'soft' model of HRM being implemented as a strategy but at this point it is important to make the distinction because literature tends to use HRM as a strategy and strategic HRM interchangeably and this tends to muddy the water still further.

The distinction drawn here is important in this research in respect of how HRM is understood and interpreted by the civil servants in this study. At this point then, it seems sensible to contextualise this research in respect of HRM and the civil service. The aim of this thesis was to investigate how civil servants negotiated the effects of HRM as a strategy for change. Its focus ethnographically lies in their everyday lived experiences. Various themes will be picked up over subsequent chapters, for example, in the following Chapter, processes of quality and commitment will be explored while in Chapter 7, issues around negotiating identity will be introduced. However, in the remainder of this chapter, I intend to explore how HRM as a departmental strategy, how it is communicated to the workforce and importantly, how and if, civil servants perceive its relevance.

Unfinished Business: A Reflexive Note

As the previous chapter identified, the civil service has been hostage to a never-ending programme of reform and in many respects for the civil service, such reform is anticipated as a consequence of government election. As a 'flagship' department, the Department has probably experienced more change than many other departments. At conception this research was born out of 'unfinished business' and an enduring curiosity to understand the nature of civil service change; change that I was caught up in through the 1980's and 1990's. I knew at that time I was part of change that I perceived as both operational and cultural, and indeed, as a junior manager part of my role was to motivate my 'team' toward embracing change. In the 1980's the drive was toward quality and Total Quality Management (TQM) was the order of the day. Throughout the 1990's economic recession contextualised the need for economy drives; for market testing; and subsequently for 'downsizing' and job losses. However, in respect of change I knew this to be a partial truth for alongside was the call for modernising government and cultural change to that end. The drive for cultural change was born out of a need to shed public perception of bureaucracy as a process of red tape, which thanks to programmes such as 'Yes Minister', clearly necessitated tea drinking as a recurrent activity. My experience as a manager left me questioning how my home Department and more widely, the civil service, would rise to what I perceived as a global change of indefinable character.To contextualise my own part in the Department's process of change I managed a small team who until approximately 1994 were peripherally attached to a larger unit within the Department. This unit was made up of approximately one hundred and forty civil servants and underwent an extensive process of market testing. Established as an area that could be put out to tender, the internal bid lost out to an external provider. The section I managed was one of two sections, which remained within the Department's confines for approximately one year before undergoing the same process. This time only internal bids were considered appropriate and retention of the sections' function was lost geographically to an area that had sustained more job losses than the headquarter (HQ) site. At a personal level, following what seemed like a very long two years, I decided to embrace the Department's drive and promotion around the positive aspects of change e.g. new opportunities, retraining etc., and to that end sallied forth in pursuit of educational horizons. Five years later I returned to ethnographically investigate what changes had manifested in the Department and how change was communicated.

The Department: On change and Time

Phase One of the research involved becoming accepted and immersed in the Division's culture. Alongside observation, this process was supplemented by informal interviews and ad hoc conversations. This involved a line of enquiry around the Department's new operational role. More specifically, it involved acquiring an understanding of how the Division operated in its supporting role within the new framework.

In this initial phase six participants took part in the research. Their responses to questions about the Department and more specifically around the communication of change were predictably varied. In creating 'thick' ethnographic data, cultural symbols come in various forms, initially cultural immersion was made more difficult due to the culture's prevalent use of acronyms. Implicit in ethnographic immersion is the immediate need to quickly become orientated to the culture's form of 'speak' i.e. the way in which it draws on language and symbols to create meaning (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Willis, 2000). Despite my former service and mindful of a five-year absence, an immediate culture shock was recognition of the need to speak in this short form. Although I quickly, and somewhat unnervingly, lapsed back into this habit the intervening years and the project of change in the civil service, necessitated a crash course in extending my vocabulary. As Valerie commented,

> 'I know it's a bad habit that we all do and we all try not to, so it's not good for communication is it?'

Noticeable was the common practice of speaking in a plural context through the pronoun 'we'. This is a point worth of early note that I will come back to. However, throughout my interaction with the civil servants who took part in this study the one acronym that was significant by its absence was that of HRM. However, during the research process, HRM was later to be realised as a mechanism for Departmental change and became a line of enquiry in Phase Two of the research process.

Initial enquiry around change in the civil service generated numerous themes. Enquiring about staff morale and departmental changes, Valerie explained,

> 'I love my job, it's wonderful, it is. I really, really enjoy it and everybody on the section does which I think is... we are only a small section, but everybody there really enjoys what they do'.

Explaining that she had worked on the same section for a considerable period of time, Valerie reported that during that time she had experienced,

> 'eight name changes, two different departments, we have moved division within, so you know it's... yet I am still doing exactly the same job, well to a certain extent... I am still doing the basic remit (job) I was ten, twelve years ago'

This example at one level illustrates how often the Department changes but at another paradoxically remains the same. The consequences of Departmental name changes have internally always been a source of amusement and frustration. Valerie recalls the time when,

> 'we all got a little pack of 100 business cards and they turned up on our desks and as we were opening them we got a Tannoy message (speaker system) to say from tomorrow the Department has changed name and we thought ...

oh…I have still got them on my desk and I use them to take telephone notes on, so you know... and you think hey… that was good wasn't it?'

At the other end of the scale, Stuart was less happy about Departmental change and his current position. He explained that since the mid 1990's the Department has

'has been cut to the bone'

and in respect of job changes he had experienced, he said

'it doesn't matter where you move, things don't change. They expect you to do more work with less people' he reported being

'overwhelmed with the amount of work that we have got to do'.

His concern was for the work that would not get done which he described as, 'soul destroying at times'.

Stuart explained that the Department encouraged staff to be au fait with the latest Departmental changes. This was particularly important in his role but the lack of staffing meant that there were not enough hours in the day for such good practice. One of problems he identified was the turnaround of work and in particular, he cited the use of email. As an example of how workload had increased and time had accelerated he explained that, there was no security in accomplishing a task promptly because customers are,

'responding within two minutes and nothing can be put on the back burner you know, it's all active'.

During my time this concurred with my perception. All the participants I shadowed regularly checked their email screens. When engaged in conversation with me I was very aware of their eyes drifting to their screens particularly, if an envelope popped up indicating a new message. Shadowing Julie, I became very aware of the amount of emails she received and how quickly she preferred to turn them around. On one occasion while she was explaining something to me an envelope popped up and aware she had noticed its arrival and mindful of my presence as a potential disruption to her routine, I said, 'Julie is your email alright?' to which she replied,

> 'you are getting worse than me now!'

and indeed, it was a fair comment. As time passed I became conscious of time as an imperative particularly in respect of emails and, of Stuart's earlier comment, that nothing could be put on the 'back burner'.

In highlighting the issue of time, Stuart explained that in addition to keeping up to date with contemporary work related issues, in theory staff were encouraged to engage in training or education. His concern was that one of the reasons he was so stretched in terms of workload was that one of his colleagues was thus engaged in a long-term and substantial study programme. Consequently, study leave absences impacted on his duties and those of other colleagues. He expressed this as,

> 'I just can't get my head round this, that while people are off two days a week doing revision and exams, somebody's got to carry the shit and suffer for it you know, and the Department encourages people to do this and I can see why

> it's a good thing, we need skilled people, but we haven't got the staff to cover, we just haven't got the staff'.

Stuart's concerns went beyond simply the issue of an increased workload when covering periods of study, sickness and annual leave. He identified that as a consequence there was no time for him to engage in independent activity that would enhance his own development. In this respect he was mindful that it was necessary for him to provide such evidence for his annual report, the outcome of which ultimately impacted on his performance related pay. Stuart explained to me that,

> 'the process has been changed every year for the last three or four years so every year you try, you've got to instead of just writing the report, you've got to become au fait with the new system.................... the way it works now is... your forward job plan is your annual report as well. The idea being that as you are completing it you are building your annual report as well. Which I agree with. I think it's a good idea that, but it's bloody hard work managing staff, time wise, this is the problem, it's all down to time. It's just finding the time to do it, you know'.

The issue of time came up again and again with all the participants in Phase 1 but in the early phase what struck me was the circular speak around processes to do with appraisal, pay and promotion. Dominic took an upbeat approach to the Departmental changes he had experienced over approximately the last twelve years. He suggests that,

> 'people learnt from the first round of change, that now we are in this thing where nothing is permanent and things do move. Staff do move around a bit, goal posts are constantly being shifted left, right and centre',

but he suggests that, 'the old school' have gone and what remains is a,

> 'more dynamic structure' in which he 'found that people's thinking is more dynamic as well you know, they are not just thinking about themselves and their own little slot but they are thinking about the bigger implications of their work. You know they are starting to see that they are part of a much larger machine'.

Dominic's mechanistic metaphor is interesting on various levels. Despite his perception of the Department and the Department's staff as being more dynamic in its streamlined form, it is interesting and perhaps significant, that he likens the civil service to a machine. This seems to imply that despite a perceived 'make-over', the wheels of bureaucracy are still firmly culturally entrenched through this use of metaphor.

However, while Dominic's view of the Department is optimistic around its dynamics, he doubts his potential to progress in the organisation. Dominic identified his skills around the use of information technology and he stated that,

> 'To progress in this organisation is to take on staff as it were. You know because you always assume that the higher and higher up you go the more

your world becomes administration rather than hands on, get your hands dirty and this sort of thing, which is where my skills actually lie. Therefore, I am now stuck where I am stuck, in a grade and, I am doing work far beyond that grade and I am not going to be able to progress because I am not seen (as) fitted to progress to the next level because I have not got those skills they require for a bog standard, you know'.

The very structure that Dominic earlier defined as dynamic seemed to hold him hostage then, to his own fate.

In the first phase of research the examples drawn above are representative of the cohort as a whole. Enquires around change frequently located the Department alongside its recent history of change. Similarly reference was made to the increased use of technology and in particular how as an example, the email system had enhanced speed of delivery and seemed to have accelerated time. However, perhaps predictably all roads led to the changes these individuals had experienced over recent years in respect of processes around appraisal, performance related pay and promotion. The objective of the research was to understand the lived cultural reality of change through the gaze of civil servants but in a triangulated approach, it was obviously to contextualise these alongside the Department's structure, processes and practices. This led the investigation toward understanding the Department's personnel policy and practices.

Secondary Data

Full research access had been given in respect of the Department's intranet and as a secondary source of information this proved invaluable in updating and understanding Departmental policies and strategies and importantly, in contextualising the participants' accounts. In addition to this secondary sources around the Department's aims and objectives, were highly visible. For example, on entering the HQ building the foyer was liberally scattered with displays of Departmental literature and magazines but most prominent was a large plasma screen which gave updates on the Department's progress in achieving its aims and objectives.

Logging in to the Department's intranet, the system defaulted to the Department's news page. Some of the wider cohort (i.e. Phase 1 and Phase 2) reported that they had been able to change this default in order to skip the page and save time while others dutifully scan read the Department's latest news and progress updates. In addition to this screen, staff also had opportunity to engage in conversation with their colleagues across the Department by way of intranet 'Notice Boards'. These consisted of several sites where staff could enter into debate, promote good practice or advertise personal articles for sale, for example, caravans, French gites and so on.

Prior to my arrival in the Department there existed one site, entitled 'Speaker's Corner' where staff could state their point of view on issues of interest to them. However, because it did not revolve around a specific function, the site generated material, which was considered to be inappropriate, e.g. it was reported that in some respects it was used to critique Departmental procedures and processes. Trawling these sites was interesting because invariably the same names reappeared time after time. This was a point that Valerie had alerted me to and although she occasionally entered into conversations, she invariably did this in respect of correcting or clarifying a misguided view around her area of work or alternatively, she engaged in sharing a point of good practice. When I asked Stuart, whether he ever clicked into the Notice Boards he said,

> 'No. No. I don't even dream of it, don't even dream of it. I mean, I can honestly say to you that over the past eighteen months you will probably find my name three times. One was quite interesting I went on to, they have this thing, Speaker's Corner and here I am talking to you about stress and too much to do, and there were these people their names just kept coming up again and again and again and I got the feeling that maybe some people were just sitting there, on there all day. Batting things back and to, just gossip. Anyway they have taken Speaker's Corner away, that's gone'.

From trawling the Department's intranet site; viewing the virtual Notice Boards; and, the work related literature, what became clear very quickly was a corporate style of 'speak' and the recurrent use of phrases, e.g. 'supporting delivery', 'a talented workforce' and so on. It became quickly quite obvious that a functional and cohesive discourse was at work that linked the Department's aims and objectives to its work practices and staff related processes. However, at the same time withdrawal of 'Speaker's Corner' also suggested that open communication was not perhaps as open as it could be and a form of censorship existed that protects a 'corporate speak'. In short the missing link in understanding the social and cohering processes evident in the Department's culture was found through its HR strategy.

The Department's HR Strategy

For reasons of anonymity the precise wording on the Department's HR strategy cannot be used. For the purpose of this thesis, it has been modified in an attempt to disguise its origins. However, the aims and objectives of the Department are typical of many other large organisations and government departments. For example, the aims and goals of the Department have much common with those of,

- The Ministry of Defence
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
- The Inland Revenue
- The Department for Education and Skills
- The Department for Work and Pensions
- The Department of Trade and Industry

Any direct replication with the researched Department or those listed above is therefore, unintentional.

A Strategy in the Making

The Department was in the process of finalising its HR strategy. The draft originated from the Department's Personnel and Leadership Division and the Department's staff, were actively invited to give feedback via the intranet site or by attending one of a series of HQ focus groups. Overall the Department's aim was to 'Remain in Front' and it set out to achieve this through four people centred goals. These were,

- Ensure delivery through an enhanced culture
- Secure people with the right skills to deliver
- Enhance and utilise effectively the talent of our people
- Improve and manage performance effectively.

As an organisation, the Department's aims to a large extent are caught up in its business objective and so it proves difficult to disguise these. Very loosely, they can be summed up as: striving for excellence; ensuring opportunity; and realising possibility.

Recognising the challenge of meeting these aims the Department identified five key areas on which it needed to concentrate,

- Defining the needs of customers
- Programme and Project Management
- Developing successful partnerships
- Flexible resourcing
- Valuing diversity and developing organisational talent.

This cascade of aims and objectives finally informs a list of 'behaviours' that determine how the Department wants to work. These include,

- We value diversity and listen
- We seek to learn and improve
- We are committed to making a difference
- We embrace challenge and innovation
- We value openness and honesty

The importance of this strategy became immediately apparent in respect of the Departmental culture I was observing and the views I was listening to. The sequential nature of the strategy clearly has implications at grass root level. Proactive demonstration of the behaviours, do of course, impact through to the staff appraisal system and ultimately the performance related pay of individuals. Stuart and Julie had both made the point that their respective line managers encouraged them to consider making use of the training facilities on offer and to actively become involved in other activities. Stuart's complaint was that he had no time to do this because of his excessive workload but Julie took a proactive approach to collecting evidence for her report. In fact she confided that this was a contributory factor in taking part in this research.

HR Strategy: A Presence?

The aims and behaviours were highly visible in the Department. They could be found on the intranet, Departmental letterheads, calendars and 'PC mouse mats' and so on. However, I wondered to what extent people were aware of the Department's HR strategy and importantly, what its impact was on their everyday experiences and reality. The intention of this line of enquiry was to serve as an indicator of how successfully the strategy had been communicated in the Department. In Phase Two of the research, this became then, a focus for enquiry.

One line of questioning that was pursued was whether the civil servants knew the Department's aims and objectives. Overall the response was mixed. Those civil servants in a higher grade tended to affirm that they did and although few volunteered them it became obvious from the ensuing conversation that overall they possessed a good general awareness. Others however, claimed not to know these. When they were gently reminded that the aims consisted of, 'striving for excellence; ensuring opportunity; and realising possibility' and were located for example, on their calendars, business cards, letterheads etc., people tended to recognise them quite quickly.

When Fred was asked whether he knew the aims and objectives, he replied

> 'yes and no. I have read bits about delivering results and, but it doesn't really mean anything to me'

In defence of this, he suggested that this was because,

> 'I probably concentrate too much on just my own job and not really look wider where my job fits in with different people's objectives and the Department's overall. I think you get lost really, you are in a big organisation you lose track

> of where you fit in really but with the way it has gone the last few years there is a lot less staff. You seem to be a lot more, a lot busier really so it's having the time more than anything to sit back and...'

Fred suggested that possibly if he worked on a policy section or he worked in a job that delivered the Department's end product, then he would probably be more familiar with the Department's overall aims and objectives.

Keith acknowledged that he knew the Department's aims and objectives but he was cynical around the Department's motives and in particular the formulated behaviours. He said,

> 'I see where they are coming from and I see what they are trying to do but I think they don't necessarily mean anything to the common man. What's the latest one about nine things that we do now, we are open and honest and all that sort of stuff'.

The 'behaviours' in the Department's HR strategy that determine how the Department 'wants to work' proved more problematic. Most people recalled there were behaviours and most volunteered those of, openness, honesty and flexibility. Across the cohort, the most contentious behaviour was that of 'openness and honesty'. In this respect Keith represented a recurring sentiment. He stated,

> 'So now we are open and honest and before we weren't I presume!'

Conversely others were less concerned in this respect. They did not necessarily see them as something new largely because they believed that they simply stated common sense practice that they engaged in. Sara's makes the point below that changing people's behaviour is difficult,

> 'I think it's very difficult to get people to change their behaviour because a lot of individuals.... The people who work on my team for example they are all very helpful to customers.......'

Prior to a visit from a senior officer from London, Sara explained to her team that,

> 'We don't have to worry too much because we are already doing all the things the behaviours are about, you know. We listen, we are honest you know. We tell our customers it's not perfect when it isn't, you know. And we apologise if we make a mistake because we are not perfect either. I said (to the team) I don't want anybody worrying they are going to trip themselves up and fall over..... I know we are adhering to the standards and behaviours'

Enquiry was made of the cohort around whether they thought about the Department's aims and objectives in respect of their reports and whether they considered the behaviours for example, fed into the reporting system. On the whole the response to this was negative. Keith, a self-professed cynic of the Department's initiatives, admitted he had not thought of that and at his grade this was somewhat surprising. Conversely and somewhat paradoxically, Shelley who was several grades lower in the Department's hierarchical grading structure than Keith, was concerned that she was not as up to date on Departmental issues as she should be and yet, ultimately she recognised the importance of Departmental knowledge and its potential to impact through to the reporting system. Shelley said she did not know the Department's aims and objectives and justified this as,

> 'I think sometimes..., I feel am not very up on the stuff everybody hands out you know. When people ask you things I think ohhh I should know that really. But sometimes I think you get that bogged down in the job and doing all the mundane stuff that like I say, I think things like this tend to get shoved to one side because they are not.. They don't, they do interfere with your everyday but not as an effect it's all part of the big picture isn't it, you know to me...you are just a small piece that makes it all, you send it all up the line to where all these things are developed, where it all fits together'.

Shelley clearly recognises the Department as an objective whole made up of smaller parts and she recognises that she plays a small part in the 'big picture'. Like Stuart and Fred before her, the implication is she is too busy to keep up to date with specifics and more intent on achieving her immediate tasks in the best way she knows how. However, her understanding of the significance of the behaviours is revealed in her final comment, she says,

> 'it's the way you are as a person because I do the best that I can and I do, I come into work and do what I am expected to do and a lot of the things are in my life anyway. You know, you are honest and you are open, you want to learn things and improve yourself, you know what I mean. You try to be

innovative because of the way the performance reports are you have got to suggest things and come up with things and I think we (the team) have had discussions about this before where they have brought things in, but we do that anyway'.

Shelley's comment is quite revealing, despite her self-professed lack of knowledge her remarks indicate that she is aware of several of the Department's key behaviours. For example, she identifies openness and honesty, alongside the generally less recalled behaviours of innovation and creativity.

At first sight it could be assumed that the message of HRM, or more specifically the Department's aims and objectives in this respect are lost in the communication process. It would seem that some civil servants are too busy or too preoccupied with more important things to engage with its message. Less positively it could also be assumed that they are suspicious and cynical of a long line of successive initiatives. Sara made the point,

> 'I think that you always get people you know who have a negative response and it's no wonder because there's been so much over the years. It's like when they brought out HRD, I don't know if you remember that? And they had an HRD co-ordinator. And people soon got wind of the fact that these HRD attachments are basically getting someone in to do the grotty work that they couldn't be bothered to do themselves. And of course when that happens people switch off don't they?'.

Or do they? The point was made repeatedly that the Department's behaviours were simply representing the way in which people were already engaging in their duties. This would certainly make sense of Keith's earlier remark, which was that before he was told to be 'open and honest' he apparently was not. In explaining that the repetitious nature of initiatives, Sara made the comparison with IIP (Investors in People), she said,

> 'I think it's a bit like when IIP was introduced many years ago and everybody was going oh what's all this, you know investing, we've got to do this, we've got to that and I remember saying, hang on a minute we already do this we just don't realise that this IIP banner is just a way of encompassing all the things we are doing'.

The reported succession of initiatives implies civil servants were experiencing initiative fatigue. The extent to which the main features that Guest (1987) identified as embedded in HRM around, integration, quality, flexibility and commitment are being achieved in the Department is questionable. If that means that the Department's HR Strategy is inclusive of these, then the Department meets the criteria. However, in respect of staff engagement the process seems to fall down around how it is successfully communicated to its staff. One of the principles that Mullins (2002) identifies as necessary for successful integration is recognition of 'people's needs and expectations at work'. In respect of this cohort a surface approach would indicate 'initiative fatigue'. It seems pertinent to question whether people's expectations of work are being influenced by such fatigue and the overall impact this potentially has on successful communication of the Department's HR strategy as an inclusive process that initially sought civil servants' views. Was people's lack of knowledge around the Department's aims, objectives and behaviours indicative of as Sara's comment that implied people simply 'switched off'? In the following Chapter, the question of commitment will be considered as an alternative indicator around how successful the Department's HRM strategy is being communicated as an inclusive process.

Chapter 5

Get with the Programme!

In the previous chapter it was suggested that the Department's HRM strategy was possibly falling victim to 'initiative fatigue'. That is, that the civil servants in question had experienced a long line of initiatives which, drawing on the words of Sara, they had potentially 'switched off' from. This chapter will explore this in more depth and it will do so by focusing on civil servant knowledge of the HRM strategy and how the Department operationalises the behaviours it wants to work by. The key characteristic of HRM commitment that will be considered is that of commitment at a macro level. In this chapter then, the process of commitment will be considered alongside the work objective and in respect of perceptions around quality of service delivered. However, in the following chapter, the social processes of commitment will be explored around individual identification with the organisation and it is important at this point to make that distinction.

At first sight, the Department's HR strategy would appear to fit the criteria of a 'soft' model. That is one, which has high commitment to its workforce, encourages empowerment and creativity. In the high commitment category Watson, (2003:109) suggested that, 'employers seek a close relationship with workers who become psychologically or emotionally involved with the enterprise'. In this typology, Watson suggested that developmental opportunities are built into long-term employment and that 'workers are given discretion about how tasks are carried out'

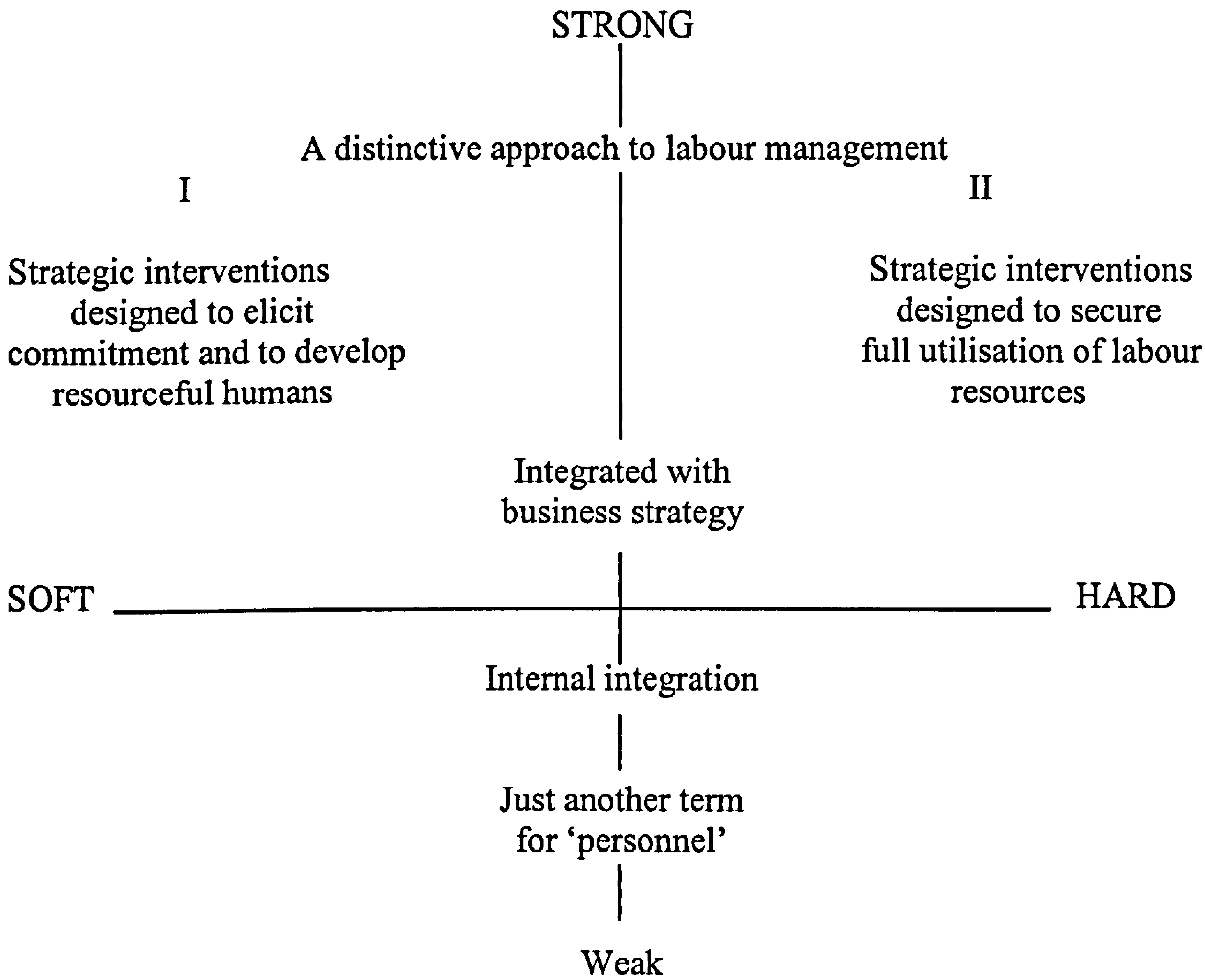
(2003:109). The Department initially seemed to fall into this category but as the data unfolded I became mindful of Legge's (1995) point that defining the meaning of HRM was problematic.

Legge (1995) identifies the dichotomy of 'hard' and 'soft' models of HRM as fraught with contradictions particularly around the descriptive language drawn on to provide meaning for the respective models. She identifies the key concept of the 'hard' model as integration but she points out that two meanings are created here. The first she identifies as integration or 'fit' with the business strategy while the second, she describes as,

> 'the integration or complementarity and consistency of 'mutuality', employment policies aimed at generating employee commitment, flexibility quality and the like' (Legge, 1995:67).

In other words, this distinction has implications as to whether HRM is determined as a strategy that imposes integration as necessary to fit or achieve the business objectives, therein to manage personnel to that end, or, whether it coalesces into what would traditionally constitute personnel functions or personnel management (Legge, 1995). Legge (1995:68) draws on Storey's model of mapping HRM meaning. This is illustrated below and as the data unravels will be called upon in order to try and confer meaning on the Department's HR strategy:

Fig. 6 Storey's model of mapping the various meanings of HRM
Source: Legge, (1995:68).



Drawing on Guest's (1987) definition around the goal of integration, Legge (1995) determined that several factors come into play, the first cohesion of policies, is reliant on the importance of line managers internalising and reflecting them in their behaviour. If these are assimilated and reflected in the actions and behaviours of line managers, then it seems reasonable to assume a positive influence will be exerted in influencing similar behaviour with team members and in turn, their understanding of their part in the organisation and its business objective. As a measure of determining the Department's success in communicating its HR strategy then, it seemed pertinent to first explore how managers, then grades at a managerial level perceived the

Department's strategy and its importance in achieving the Department's business aims and objectives. However, in line with this it is perhaps pertinent to first consider the cultural context in which the Department's HR strategy operates. The two government departments that merged were distinct in respect of their identity and the function they performed. The merger took place within the last ten years and in itself, has brought cultural problems around the different ways of working. It would seem logical that an HR strategy would play its part in fusing the two departments around its cultural ethos in respect of work expectations and practices. The overall aims and objectives of the Department would seem to do just that but in many respects, evidence of competing subcultures persist.

Looking Around: Culture

> 'In general, which values are given priority is partly a matter of the subculture one lives in and partly a matter of personal values. The various subcultures of a mainstream culture share basic values but give them different priorities'
>
> (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980:23).

When I asked Matt about the organisational changes that have occurred in the Department's structure in the last decade and about its emergent culture, he said,

> 'I think, my personal view is that the culture of the ... (incoming merged department) ... was when they, when we merged with them, that their culture is a lot difference from our culture, ...(the name of the original department). I felt we were more down to earth whereas the ...(incoming department's)

people are a bit airy fairy, I don't mean that in any rude way ...and now we report back into the (incoming department) side. They have got some strange views ...(long pause) ... (incoming department's) people. I think they are very ivory tower, very, they think they are a cut above the rest of the civil service because they are (the name of the incoming department)'.

This was interesting in respect of the two merging cultures because while Matt reported that the incoming department seemed to think they were a 'cut above the rest of the civil service' Matt's next comment suggested otherwise in respect of their working standards. He said,

'I felt that from an ...(Division's work was specified)... perspective we took over, we imposed our ...(ibid.)... on them, their ... (ibid.) ...was very archaic, it was poorly managed, poorly delivered. They had a very strange idea you know, ... (the Division) ... were basically their servants to do as they wanted, you know? They were very rude, very nasty, they seemed to be very down on ...(the Division) ... let's put it that way and the impression I got from the people who came over, they were a bit downtrodden, they felt the poor people, there was always this attitude why should we be spending money on internal ... (ibid.) ...when you know that could buy me a new ... (aspect of incoming department's work specified) ... , you people in ... (the Division) ... just get in the way and they had this very sneaky attitude and I have always felt that. And I still feel that that culture still exists ...... (long pause) ..... on the ... (merged department specified) side. They think that you know that the job they are doing is very important but I don't think that they actually related, they don't actually see how ... (Division's work specified) ... helps them. And I think there's still this bit of a clash there, you know, they are above that kind of thing. They think we should be running around doing things for them, perhaps we shouldn't be but'.

At this point, I suggested that the Division's work was then, service driven and Matt agreed placing emphasis on the level of service expected,

> 'you know you *have to* look after my needs and you have to do this and you *have to do that* ..... (long pause) ..... low opinion of ... (the Division)'.

Matt, made some interesting observations around why the different cultures exist and highlighted some of the problems experienced in merging the old and incoming departments. Several times and in common with others, the HQ site was referred to as a 'clerical factory'. He explained that there had been 'many examples' of work had been moved from London to the HQ site and the level of the service that had subsequently been delivered had come as a surprise to the incoming department. Matt explained that,

> There's many examples of this where they have said they are moving forty jobs from London to ... (HQ site) ... and when somebody gets here it has been watered down to about twelve jobs because they have decided to look at the way they operate and they streamline the service and they work better because as a clerical factory we know how to organise things in ... (name of site). So there is definitely a difference of opinion, there's a different culture. There is

> also this feeling that they in London, it's the crème de la crème you know. They are special people and they are rather mollycoddled. They have got a lovely building, beautiful building much better than the old ... (former Departmental name specified) ... fountains in the centre you ought to go........... You open the doors and there's this big fountain, big glass balls right up to the roof, plants and flowers growing, really excessive. But it engenders that culture you know they are special people when really they are just the provinces'.

Matt also went on to explain that while one of the other HQ sites seemed to feel inferior or 'second class' to London, overall it was the researched site which was definitely at the bottom of the pile.

In describing the merged cultures as competing in status, it seemed to simply reproduce notions of the civil service as a hierarchical structure that at another level imposed a site hierarchy. However, sociologically the repeated references to the site as a 'clerical factory' also suggested undertones of a pecking order or class system. This theme around the functionality of the HQ site was further contrasted, when Matt explained that despite plans to relocate civil servants from London and to reduce public expenditure, planned relocations never actually materialised. When I suggested that the HQ site was the smallest of all the Department's HQ sites, Matt explained that,

> 'it also feels threatened, it's always felt threatened................. two thousand Londoners were going to contract (to move up) and by the time they

> moved all the people who were going to move up, there were fifteen hundred people in ...(name of site) ..., there is now five hundred. And Londoners just carried on ... Their work population is still increasing, they refuse to move people out, they refuse to, they just don't .... (long pause) .... consider (moving), on the grounds they have to be close to Ministers so...(pause)'.

The implication here then, is that large concentrates of civil servants remain located in London close to their respective ministers and engaged in policy making. In this respect, the HQ site has a reputation for setting up systems that subsequently implement the policy created in London. A differentiation exists here that suggests a clear distinction between skilled and semi-skilled status workers. Matt gave the example of a Government initiative that went drastically wrong in that its implementation and procedural consequences were not thoroughly thought through. The following example, illustrates the HQ site as a 'clerical factory' and the cultural differences that exist between the Department's sites. Referring to a new Government initiative that recompensed members of the public for a material acquisition, Matt said,

> 'Whoosh and they just could not cope with it. So what they did was, they said to, they got a guy up here and said, you know how to deal with this one, sort this mess out. They put an HEO in charge, right sort this out, they sent a message out to everybody saying do you know anybody who wants a job for the next six weeks, yeah? So ......(pause) ..... all got kids they called them the Muppet babies, I think they called them. My son came and worked here, he was eighteen or nineteen, they gave him a temporary AO job for six to

> eight weeks at AO money, bloody good money straight out of sixth form. A lot of other people got their kids in and they just processed these payments and they just set it up and they got the team set up and they got the rules and they set up a little data base to record their decisions and they had one team opening the post and sorting, another team checking, and they got it organised and they paid it and they got it back on target and saved the Department's arse and it you know. And that was the difference you know, they couldn't organise a piss up in a brewery in London, that sort of thing couldn't do it ....and you know that's the difference, and it is a difference. They did not know how to go about, they just couldn't........... permanent team down there'.

This is a long set of quotes but they serve well in demonstrating the cultural differences that seem to exist across the Department's sites in respect of job specifications and experience and in this respect, seem to underpin a recurrent discourse around 'us' and 'them'. The question of site differences was a point to which Ian referred. He commented that,

> 'It's just a tribal thing isn't it you know we are from the North West and you are from London and you are from the North East. But it's OK because we are North East and we are up North and it's all a working class thing. You do see that, you do see more people in London are, either appear to be educated or a bit more, add a bit more thought to what they do I think. A lot of them are not communicators, a lot of them are thinkers and pontificators and talk about maybe the odd Latin phrase here and there and talk cheese and wine. Whereas

> here people and … (name of another HQ site) …in particular, I noted a real connection between those two sites maybe that's because people on both sides felt a bit under pressure because the sites might not be as viable as the other two, I don't know'.

At a practical research level, my observations and conversations detected a distinct difference in the way the different sites work to deadlines. At the researched site work is scheduled and completion dates are allocated, however, from my observations the same was not always apparent with other sections based, for example, in the other sites and in particular, the London offices. In the researched HQ it seemed common practice to build a contingency into the job completion deadline. This tends not to be excessive but allows for practical problems around for example, potential sickness of team members. However, I noticed in one of the sections I spent time with, that when requests were received for particular jobs, the request often came with unrealistic deadlines. For example, 'can we have this job within two days please?' The requests often came from London and sometimes the North East but in respect of the former, there was little understanding that the section providing the service was not in a position to drop other jobs to accommodate them at whim or, that a job may in itself take longer than the imposed deadline.

This was a distinct cultural difference that was immediately apparent around user expectation. The researched section had attempted to set in place a programme of re-education around how long specific tasks took in order to avoid future problems and in a few isolated instances, inter-office conflict. However, while awareness was raised around practical logistics such as this, in some cases the effect was short-lived and marked by the next 'urgent' request. This potentially ties in with Ian and Matt's comments around a potential lack of communication in respect of the London offices and perhaps, their need to respond quickly to the demands of ministers without fully engaging with potential practical problems around implementation. Carol explained that often her team worked excessive hours trying to accommodate unreasonable demands and she said, the team,

> 'have tried every way I believe to educate. Because if you keep doing the same thing (working excessive hours) they will keep putting the same requests in, making the same mistakes. So we try different ways of working with them'.

In terms of the merging cultures then, several key themes emerge here. First, that the researched HQ shares a history of uncertainty around its future with another Northern HQ site. Through civil service reform there has been repeated attempts to relocate the large numbers of civil servants in the London and the South East in general, but as Matt's comment illustrates, such initiatives do not seem to realise through to fruition and the tradition of civil servants being located near to ministers seems an imperative. As such the sites outside London have borne the brunt of government cutbacks, both in terms of 'hiving off' and redundancy. There is not then, the same culture of security at the HQ site that seems to exist at the London sites. In this respect this seems to perpetuate the 'us and them' discourse heightened still further by a perceived 'specialness' that seems to influence both sides in their approach to each other, in terms of permanency and in respect of how they practically approach work.

The important thing to remember is that the project of civil service reform and the longstanding history of both the merged departments plays its part here. As Matt's comment illustrates the HQ site has gone from a headcount of around fifteen hundred civil servants to around five hundred. In this respect it must always be remembered that the site largely consists of a workforce that worked formerly for a flagship department that delivered a key public service. Today little of that original service remains because it has been 'hived off' into associative agencies, which have then been merged into other government departments. In effect then, the depleted staff that remain still provide similar support services but to a new department with new working objectives. In terms of its cultural identity and in relations to its cultural history, the HQ site exists under a very different guise. As the 'new kids on the block' it is perhaps easy to see why Matt and Ian report a perception of superiority amongst the incoming department's staff, they are after all, the one's holding the ball so to speak and familiar with the 'game'. In respect of cultural change, Matt pertinently makes the point,

> 'I don't know it's very difficult isn't it? It is very difficult to try and change culture. I mean it takes years to change culture doesn't it'.

Meshing Behaviours and Strategy

It seemed logical that the Department's HR strategy was a way of bringing together the cultures around work expectations through the relatively newly merged Department's aims and objectives. At this suggestion Ian, in his experience, explained, 'You know people are trying to get the Department of ...members of the Department to focus on what the main departmental objectives are so that when they get their own objectives they can think 'ah ha' I can see how my job links into that ... The difficulty we have got in ... (the Division) ... I think is that really we can't see that we can, I don't think people can make a connection between (them)'.

In respect of the Department's aims and objectives, he continued,

'I don't think they need to focus to do their job in that I don't think it aids them at all to know the aims of the Department. It's people on high that would like you to try and link it all together but it just doesn't you know? By the time it gets down to the person on the shop floor it's so watered down. People know that they are aiming to implement systems and they are aiming to keep things working and they are running projects and they are doing x, y, z, but to try and link that in, because again, they are all internal, the Department of finance system and the personnel system are all internal mechanisms rather than something that looks out to the general public or others'.

In other words Ian is suggesting that there is no linkage between what is perceived as an internal system and the Department's overall end product, which on the 'frontline' culminates in a high profile service to the public. It would seem from this then, that the HR strategy remains a somewhat remote concept and yet in intention it is clearly integrated through the staff appraisal system, through expectations around quality and, the processes of commitment and teamwork to that end.

Around the behaviours people commonly referred to them as a set of common sense working values that everyone should sub-scribe to. Matt said,

> 'the people who work here are very switched on. I don't think they need to be pushed in any of these areas. They live those values rather than have to be promoted, they don't need to be told or guided on them, they live the values'.

Ian went further he said,

> 'The behaviours are so, should be so part of everybody's normal working life anyway, they are just good manners a lot of them. We all listen to each other and the things that anyone would do who was a professional that wanted to, that was just being well mannered and were giving people an opportunity and everything else and people that might be trying to force those. I constantly get invited to things that say come to this event because we want to make sure that, we want to see how we can embed the behaviours in the project you are doing. How do you embed the behaviours? ......(text omitted) ....Personally you know I think they are a bit wacky, daft'.

However, despite this Ian highlighted the difficulty some members of staff would have around achieving some of the behaviours because of lack of opportunity and because of the constraint of working with public funds. He said, 'You see this bit, (indicates one of the behaviours on a Department print)," we innovate and challenge". The Department doesn't innovate and doesn't challenge because the mechanism for reporting on people in the performance sense doesn't facilitate that. You can stick your neck out and try and innovate but if you get it wrong someone will give you a bad report. You are not in a situation where you can waste public funds by experimenting with things you know. It's got to be a very low risk thing and some of those things; you know I have been there before. To innovate, if you are in the private sector well that will be money down the drain. Say you are trying to develop a De Lorean car or whatever it is and it doesn't happen, we have wasted lots of money but anyway that was our risk, that's our company. When you are using taxpayers money some of these things,... there is a bit of friction between what they are asking you to do and what you can actually do in practice, I think'.

The predominant and recurring theme throughout all the interviews and conversations was that of repetition and overload of information. The Department's aims, objectives and behaviours are as visible as wallpaper across the site but in some respects it is potentially this visibility that renders them invisible. In other words its commitment to promoting its message, actually detracts from what it is trying to disseminate to such an extent that in general, this cohort perceive they have 'heard it all before'. Ian's comment below makes this point,

'To be honest with you I think we have all read, we all know these we have heard them all before but it's just that because they are not part of our day to

> day work, there's no opportunity for them to sink in really..... (text omitted) ......a couple stick in your mind, the rest just peter out because they are not, whether or not it's useful to know those on a day to day basis I don't know. It's one of those you know you will all be brainwashed into making sure we create an opportunity and release potential etc but half the people can't understand, me included .....(text omitted) .... It's all a load of high level I don't know what'.

Contradiction appears here around Ian's words and he was not alone in this. At one level the behaviours are common sense values that people are engaging with as a matter of course, but if in an attempt to trace them back at a higher level to include Department's overall aims and objectives the message is lost. In respect of organisational commitment this identifies a distinct problem around cohesion and integration. The mechanistic metaphor of the HQ site as a 'clerical factory' perhaps aptly identified part of the problem through the following quote from Ian,

> 'We have a quality management system which isn't used as much as it used to be but surely that goes against the innovate and challenge because what we are saying is this, is the way to do this because we need to do it right every time, we need to make sure the grommet that comes out the other end is the right shape'.

In other words Ian's earlier comment around the lack of opportunity to gamble with tax payers' money renders some of its behavioural aspiration around innovating and challenging as obsolete simply because the process is so highly mechanised. If a key 'behaviour' such as this is seen as redundant then potentially it assists the process of dismissing the importance of the 'behaviours' overall. However, not everybody shares this view, I asked Clive what he thought of the 'behaviours' and whether he felt patronised by them. He said,

> 'It's hard to see how. Those are just sensible for anybody. It always struck me as slightly odd to say that these are, behaviours.........(pause)...... they way we want to work, ... (pause)........... most people ought to work, want to work that way'.

Far from being patronised Clive's response and approach toward the Department's behaviours was the most philosophic of the cohort. Interestingly instead of viewing the Department's aims, objectives and 'behaviours' at a departmental level, Clive assumes them at an individual level and in respect of the difference he can make to society through his departmental contribution. He suggested,

> 'Take the last one, "we learn and improve", yes probably I could look back years and yeah there have been one of two things I have learnt in the last year. But if I look back over twenty-four hours, what have I learnt and improved at in the last twenty-four hours, or what have I learnt in the last hour while we have been talking? What improvements can I take from our conversation, what things have I thought of as we have been talking that I can take away with me that will improve not just how I perform at work which is only part of it, but how I behave and how I think and how I do things. To me those sort of issues are sometimes more important than the ones that we can easily focus on which

are to do with outputs and there can be a tension there between being output focused, which is the way the Department would like us to be and what we are assessed on, and these sort of issues which are how we do it. There needs to be a balance because sometimes if we look at how we do it too much we end up producing nothing because we are all nice to one another. I will not tell him he has been awful because that would not be nice! Sometimes we can see things like that as cotton wool and fluffy and niceness but in fact there are some hard things in there as well. Because honest and open, you will tell somebody if they are not performing at the level you think they should be. But maybe the discussion when you have it is that your perception of what they should be doing was wrong. It's not always that we are right. I might think he's not doing very well but it may be my perception of what he is capable of or able to achieve, possibly because of what I have failed to do in the past. He can't actually get on with the job because I have never told him how to do it, the way I want it done and maybe the way I want it done isn't the best way anyway'.

When we progressed our discussion around this in respect of the appraisal system, I enquired whether the 'behaviours' allowed for a process of standardisation against which the Department's civil servants could be measured and that perhaps it was a way of fusing different cultural perspectives. Clive made the point,

'I am not sure about that word. Improving yes. Improving behaviours so that it is actually easier for us to work together easier for us to produce better results. Standardising is a difficult word because you have got, you are saying we are going to have diversity and now we are saying we are going to standardise on being diverse, maybe not. I am not saying yes ... we are standardised on being diverse, diversity is the standard yes? But often standardisation has the sense of not quite of ..... but heading that way, we are all doing it the same way and really I think we are saying we will do it differently, but we will do it compatibly. Maybe compatibility more than standard but at the end of the day we need to be producing results for, horrible word we tend to use nowadays, customers'.

Clive's view illustrates Legge's (1995) point around the difficulty of defining HRM. Can we ever be sure what it is that HRM is actually referring to? If Ian's point is assumed around the necessity to churn out grommets of the same size at a low financial risk to the public, then the HRM strategy can be seen in a harder light around output and standardisation. However, Clive makes the case for valuing diversity, and yet what diversity are we talking about? If it is diversity to challenge and innovate then as Ian highlighted there are pitfalls there around lack of opportunity. Although Carol would make the point that there is room for innovation and challenge in the most simplest of administrative tasks. However, if diversity is around taking personal responsibility for individual learning and work standards then, the strategy becomes softer and more 'touchy feely'. If this is assumed then perhaps it gives people the opportunity to dislocate from wider processes around the Department's aims and objectives. The perceived difference perhaps comes down to whether HRM is perceived at either a macro or micro level. Either way these managers perceive the process in very different ways. This in itself does not bode well for the dissemination and integration of HRM, at line manager level.

Let's Work Together

The concept of individual responsibility and team working will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. However, in respect of integrating the HRM strategy at a macro level, team working is a good example of how the 'behaviours' should, in theory, be practically realised. Penny explained that she was part of a larger team and that her manager has staff at all four HQ sites. She said,

> 'We phone each other up every day. He comes down here, I mean he comes down once a month'.

She explained that her manager had just taken on new heavy duties and that she does not,

> 'feel that he needs to be here because he is always at the end of the phones and he is helpful and we know the team'.

In this respect Penny was happy about the team she worked in and the spread of staff across the dislocated sites did not pose a problem. Ironically when she took over her present role, the same cannot be said in respect of her colleagues situated at her home site. Following an internal review when the decision was made to move specific functions, the emphasis on team working lost its significant. Penny experienced a distinct lack of co-operation from a colleague when taking over her new duties.

In this respect it seemed pertinent to link this with Penny's understanding around the Department's aims and objectives and, the working behaviours. When Penny was asked if she knew these, she replied she knew where to find them and would have done so beforehand had she known I would ask her about them. She said,

> 'I don't know. It's a sort of..., it's not the sort of thing that I..., you know, we will get an email round about how you can find the Department's objectives, but I don't feel I need to go and do them because I always think, if I am doing my job properly then I am meeting them. That's the way I look at it'.

An irony existed here, because in respect of the colleague who caused her immense inconvenience it did not seem to occur to her that the Department's aims and behaviours were potentially in place to regulate or standardise such behavioural practices. Penny explained that,

> 'The Department to me, the Department aims are about skill, bringing up the skill standards and that and sorting out ...(her divisional tasks specified)... It's not helping the, I mean it's helping the Department help the skills but I am not directly involved with the skills. So it's not that I don't, it doesn't affect me because...then I would not be in a job, but directly on my day to day business I don't' (know the aims)'.

This was interesting in respect of how Penny dislocated herself and her unhelpful colleague from the Department's aims because she believed that these revolved around skills. Yet she did not recognise her skills or her colleagues in this equation. She said,

> 'I don't know. I always have a general problem with, if people behave like human beings we would not need all these behaviours imposing on us. I don't know I just, if we just behaved like normal human beings and not horrible things, we should not have to keep being told about how to behave and it should just be normal'.

When I linked the values that underpinned the behaviours around team working with her experience of the colleague who had been unhelpful to her, Penny commented,

> 'if they want to play games, let them play games'.

This was interesting around team working because clearly team affiliation becomes a transient commodity in specific situations. In respect of the unhelpful colleague I asked her did she just accept what constituted unprofessional behaviour in relation to the standards determined through the Department's aims and behaviours, she replied,

> 'I didn't accept it and I kept asking and things like that but, when I got nowhere I just went straight to ....(name of manager), my HEO and said, "look I am getting nothing here, you are going to have to help me, I know nothing" and he did'.

We discussed how this colleague had not been open and honest in sharing and Penny advised that,

> Everybody accepts it and I don't know, it's one of these issues he's been in this section for about twelve years longer than me and it's normal behaviour for him and I would not have got any backing, you know from ...(name of site)... so I thought well I am not going to get involved in these... They are just stupid games aren't they? ....I don't know what they expect to get out of it, it gives them a bit of power maybe'.

Penny speculated that this lack of co-operation from her colleague potentially assisted her in getting to know her new job more thoroughly, she said,

> 'I am one of these people I need to know my job inside out and back to front and so in a sense it made it easier for me to learn my job and I had to learn it quick, you know because I did not have this handover'.

She further commented,

> 'it's just one of these things that you can turn it into something good or something bad. You can sit on it and worry and brood or, you can just get on with it and turn it into an opportunity'.

This last comment in particular was telling in respect of the emphasis that is placed on teamwork and importantly in taking responsibility. While Penny claimed that the 'behaviours' are just skills she was actually, in turning the experience into an opportunity', endorsing the Department's discourse around its aims and demonstrating several of the key behaviours into the bargain. The fact that her colleague was doing the opposite just relegated him to 'playing games.'

Appraising the Situation

In this respect I wondered whether the appraisal system picked up such anomalies. In theory one of the most obvious way in which to monitor organisational quality and commitment is to embed the desired Departmental 'behaviours' through the appraisal system. While Ian, as already indicated, suggested that people did not experience a 'ah-ha' moment around linking the two, Clive and Shelley had suggested otherwise. I wondered what Penny's thoughts were around the appraisal system and what she would do if member of her staff did not meet expectations. She told me that the appraisal system irritated her,

> 'because it takes a lot of time and resource. I mean to write my report and for me to have my four reviews a year, it must take me, if you put all the time together, about two weeks. By the time I have written and updated it and then ...(name of manager)'s... got to do his bit so there's his resource and then my counter-signing officer's got to do a bit more and if you put all that together. We sat and worked out it must take for one report about three weeks effort to write my report and when you think there's five or six thousand people in the Department, it's a lot of you know, the public money is being spent writing these reports, and they are a joke'.

When I asked why they were a 'joke', Penny said,

> 'I mean because you can, because they are just written, not as a joke but you tend to at the end of the year instead of ..., you can put your objectives on at the beginning of the year, but whether you meet those objectives or not does not matter, it's what goes on the report at the end of the year. So at the end of the year you write what you have done, if you see what I mean'.

The point Penny was making was that the report does not specifically focus on whether personal objectives are met because instead the reports are written in such a way that it is a given that all objectives are met. Penny clearly saw the whole procedure as time consuming and costly. She continued,

> 'it takes three weeks to write mine, three man weeks to write mine with all the effort from all the other people and then if you multiply that by about six thousand people, there's an awful lot of resource goes into that'.

Penny expressed further concern through her speculation that all she and personnel would do was file the reports in a drawer. I wondered how far Penny engaged with the appraisal system in respect of whether she saw a connection between it as a measure of staff performance and in particular, the behaviours in relation to the Department's objectives and aims. She said,

> 'Yeah. I understand the need to be a system because if people aren't pulling their weight or anything. I mean if people are doing a lot and pulling their

> weight then they need to be told that and if they are not pulling their weight they need to be told. But there's not that many people get below the markings where they don't have a pay rise, because you can't do that to a colleague can you?'

When I probed this further as a mechanism to highlight potential problems, drawing on the example of the unhelpful colleague who did not assist Penny when she took over her new role, she agreed she understood the purpose and connections but said,

> 'Yeah, I mean I couldn't right, even if I thought I am going to have to do ... (name)'s... report, I mean she is a good worker don't get me wrong, but if she wasn't, if you give her I think it's a 'D' she won't get a pay rise next year. Well I'm not going to do that to her so even if she was horrible, I would not write it in her report and then, give her a better marking and so what's the point of the report?'

In this instance what indeed is the point of the report? At a personal level, this was not my experience of receiving or completing staff appraisals' reports. As the appraisal system then is based on performance related pay, the potential consequences of this could of course, be very serious. I asked Sebastian who is relatively new to the Department, what he understood about the Department's aims, objectives, behaviours and how they related to his appraisal report and his pay. In respect of these and new initiatives, he explained that, 'I have only been here ... (a limited number of years specified) ... but I feel like long in the tooth with these things because they seem to come every few months, six months or whatever. A lot of them aren't adhered to you know. Eight a day, so when a new one comes out you do seem to go, yeah OK, heard it all before'.

I expressed surprise that he felt that way so early in his career and he said,

'that's what it seems like and they are not, there no great strides from the one that was out six months before and six months before that. They just may be given a new name like 'behaviours' or standards of working or whatever'.

Sebastian explained that his Forward Job Plan (FJP) was due soon, he commented

'The way I look at my FJP is it's a chore rather than an aid. It's an end of year, I am very cynical, I have only been here ...(X years) ... like I said, but I am very cynical about FJP's. I don't think they are motivating, they don't motivate you day to day to do your job. I think they can do the opposite when you strive all year to do a really good job and then you might get an average box mark you know. You might even get a good box mark in but the actual pay that you get doesn't seem to, the pay difference that you get at the end of the day doesn't seem to reward you for the extra effort that you have put in over the year. So yeah, maybe I should put more effort into my FJP'.

Sebastian and I joked that he perhaps needed to 'wow' the reporting officers with his clear knowledge of the Department's aims etc, he agreed,

> 'I should incorporate all the behaviours and the Department's key goals and responsibilities and, but I, like I said, personally I think it's a chore rather than an incentive'.

I asked Sebastian how long he thought he was engaged in putting his report together, he advised,

> 'On the whole process probably a full working week I would think. With gathering all your evidence together and writing it up, it's probably a full working week. I mean the quarterly reviews take probably two hours or something like that. You know to go through what you have done over the last two or three months. I mean the old system, you did it all in one go at the end of the year. Couple of years. But that probably wouldn't have taken a full working week it was, it's probably more accurate now because you are not, you have to remember everything that you have done. It seems to be a long time but I agree that it's better the way it is now doing it in gradual bits'.

Sebastian's knowledge around the Department's aims etc and how these fed into the reporting system and ultimately performance related pay, like Shelley who was the same grade, was quite extensive compared to that of more senior officers. It was interesting to note Sebastian's relatively early cynicism around the Department and its initiatives. Possibly his knowledge around how the 'behaviours' etc. fed into the appraisal system demonstrates that his cynicism has not yet reached the depths of some of those who have been in the Department longer. Discontent with the appraisal and pay system was a recurring theme.

Stuart pointed out that an individual's reports do not stand-alone but are countersigned through a comparative process, which involves comparing all the reports for officers of the same grade within the same or similar area. He said,

> 'Well isn't that fun. So my boss thinks I'm worthy of a 'C', but we now have a.., so she gives me a 'C' but then my report then goes in front of some countersigning panel that compares my, what I've done as a (grade specified) to the other ...(ibid.)'s... in the area or in the Department or whatever and there's a danger that I might be knocked down to a 'D' because there are other people they feel have done more, I don't know'.

He acknowledged that the reverse might be true and.

> 'you could be elevated up, yeah, perhaps I am a pessimist, but my view, if you do all that you're asked to and your boss thinks you have done a good job, you've got a 'C' then, yeah?'

Around the issues of pay, Matt said,

> 'My big complaint about pay is that the pay system is garbage in that I am still, there is no way I can ever reach the max of the ... (grade indicated) ...,

there is no way I can't see it happening because every year they move the max up a bit higher and then you know, you don't have this natural progression........... To me it's just a mess, total utter mess, the pay, so on that I feel that on pay they do not value us at all'.

Under civil service reform the pay scales are now determined individually with each department and in negotiation with the Treasury. Until the 1990's civil servants gained several years experience in a particular grade before promotion to the next grade was considered possible. The rationale here was that time served equipped officers with the requisite skills for the next grade up. Civil servants would annually receive an increment assuming their performance met the standard requirements of the grade. Today things are radically different the rate of incremental pay is based on the box marking received. A box marking is literally as it sounds, a mark awarded in a box and a box mark 'C', determines that standards are met and an increment is due. However, today civil servants who excel can be awarded for example, a box mark 'B' or 'A' and this means acceleration up the pay scale. Formerly people sought promotion before they reached what was called the 'max' of the scale because this showed you had demonstrated and realised your potential etc. However, promotion is scarce nowadays and the point that Matt is making is that he is unlikely to reach the max of his scale, not just because he has not realised his potential around promotion but, because each year the pay scales are changed and he cannot even realise the satisfaction of realising the maximum pay point on his pay scale and this of course, also has a long-term impact on his pension.

Contemporarily it is no longer necessary for people to serve their time before being considered for promotion. Stuart explained that when he started some considerable time ago,

> 'if you got three good annual reports you were put up for a promotion, that doesn't happen now. You've every right that if they advertise vacancies, you've every right to apply for them. Even if you have only been doing your current job for a year because of course, you go for it, if they think you are good enough, you are good enough and you are promoted, you know?'

Stuart explained that promotion is based on an officer demonstrating his/her competencies in a five hundred word supporting statement. He explained that civil servants may even take this statement into the interview with them lest they should forget their strengths and skills. His view is that,

> 'some people who come over well and talk well are getting the jobs rather than the people who can probably do the work. I don't put myself in that category, I don't, I'm not on about myself but some people are whizzing through the ranks now and maybe you know..., they have not got the experience'.

Overall then, the issue of pay and promotion is generally a contentious one. Promotion prospects are severely limited particularly outside London and the extracts selected represent various grades and include those with considerable service to those who are relatively new to the civil service.

A 'Hard' or 'Soft' Model

Determining the Department's model of HRM remains elusive. Drawing on Storey's model which maps the various meanings of HRM, theoretically the Department is probably best located in the top left quadrant of the model. That is, it is a soft model of HRM that through 'strategic interventions' is 'designed to elicit commitment and to develop resourceful humans'. Initially the possibility was considered that in some respects its strategic interlocking of the Department's aims and objectives etc, alongside its internal systems of appraisal, performance related pay, promotion might tip it into a 'hard' model of HRM. However, the evidence does not indicate that. The purpose of the Department's strategy remains elusive to many in the cohort and to meet the rigidity of the 'hard' model, the internal systems would need to be more exacting around what is meant by the Department's aims, behaviours etc. In their present form they are too abstract to be meaningful in a hard model of HRM. The other restricting factor linked with this, is the fact that the behaviours, for example, cannot be rigorously measured. To a large extent this can be attributed to the difficulty in measuring performance around the abstracted nature of administration.

Watson's (2003) typology around high commitment organisations determined that

> 'employers seek a close relationship with workers who become psychologically or emotionally involved with the enterprise. Opportunities for personal and career development are built into people's employment, which is expected to continue over a longer-term period and potentially to cover a

variety of tasks', in this typology, 'workers are given discretion about how tasks are carried out' (2003:109).

At face value the Department would seem to fall into this and in the next chapter the extent to which the cohort demonstrated psychological or emotional involvement with the Department will be considered further. The second criteria around opportunity is theoretically in place albeit that the civil service in general is under constant surveillance around reform and it would seem that perhaps some of the cohort might not readily agree around the extent of opportunity available. To a limited extent there is room for discretion about how tasks are carried out albeit Ian, might disagree in respect of his 'grommet' analogy and the Department metaphorically as a 'clerical factory'.

However, in respect of the Department's general HRM strategy, there seems much apathy around its message and its linkage to the job in hand. Yet in terms of the cohort's commitment to individual tasks and the quality of service they provide there is contradiction. In the next chapter, identification with the organisation will illustrate how these civil servants go beyond the call of duty to ensure a quality service. Sebastian in summing up the 'behaviours' described them as

> 'very wishy washy and don't actually say anything. They don't seem to give you any day to day guidance it's just words to me. I do honestly feel that it doesn't matter what the behaviours were we would carry on working the same way as we do day in day out'.

Possibly Sebastian is right. Maybe this cohort does not engage with the wider message of the HRM strategy, but something certainly has a motivating influence and possibly the next chapter will find that lies in a psychological contract and through social relations at the micro level.

Chapter 6

A Family Affair

In the previous chapter the extent to which civil servants identified with HRM as an organisational strategy was explored and its relationship with the appraisal, performance related pay and promotion systems were drawn on as mechanisms for enquiry. Overall the response was a cynical one, whereby generally the civil servants were aware of the strategy and its integration through to the above internal mechanisms. However, as one participant remarked it was a question of paying 'lip service' to something that they had heard before under different guises. In respect of the appraisal system and its relationship to the performance related pay system, response was mixed around a link between the Department's strategy and the internal systems. One of Guest's (1987) goals of integration suggested that line managers had to be proactive in leading by example in order for employees to 'get with the programme'. In respect of the Department's aims, objectives and 'behaviours' the linkage with its internal systems was not commonplace at middle management levels whereas, conversely and perhaps instrumentally, lower grades seemed more in tune with the 'fit'.

However, the site is known for its high quality and efficient delivery of services and as some of the earlier comments have indicated, its sense of community and cultural cohesion. This chapter will now explore whether HRM impacts on the civil servants at a cultural level and in this respect it will draw on Schein's model of values, beliefs as fluid entities that can be negotiated depending on allegiance.. Drawing on the rhetoric of HRM it will be suggested that it discursively constructs a metaphor of family, which relies on social commitment and identification processes to engineer a desired culture. Examples of this will be drawn from the data through the use of language, teamwork and ritualistic behaviour and perceptions around being valued.

Let's Talk

Returning to the civil service evoked many déjà vu moments for me. One of the key elements of civil service culture that had slipped away in the intervening years was the way in which people spoke. As mentioned earlier, the use of acronyms is prevalent and necessitated a refresher course to enhance my vocabulary but I had forgotten the pluralistic way in which people spoke. The use of the 'royal' 'we' is everywhere and of course, mirrored further still through the Department's 'behaviours' which as a reminder are, as follows,

- We value diversity and listen
- We seek to learn and improve
- We are committed to making a difference
- We embrace challenge and innovation
- We value openness and honesty.

The use of 'we' when explaining a procedural matter is understandable because the individual is clearly speaking on behalf of the organisation in a professional capacity. Further my presence as a researcher distinguished me from the significant other but what was particularly noticeable was the way in which it was harnessed to speak on behalf of team members. At times it was like dealing with an amorphous body that moved in harmony verifying the views or actions of the team or each other. The 'Team' as a discursive construct came into fruition in the civil service during the 1990's. Before 'teams' and importantly, 'team working', civil servants were attached to sections or units set within a particular office. The introduction of teams and the emphasis on working unselfishly as a member of a team, preferably a successful team, became an important factor in the appraisal system. Ideally professional practice is represented through being a 'team player'.

My personal recollection of this new emphasis coincided with the Department's introduction of Human Resource Development in the early 1990's when a new discourse emerged that elevated the concept of training to that of development. The discursive regime at that time was that the Department was investing heavily in the training of its staff and that individuals could likewise develop their own potential by seeking support for individual learning programmes. These could be in-house training schemes or independent programmes of study that in a roundabout sort of way would be of benefit to the Department, for example, an A' Level or an Open University programme. As a manager I was encouraged to motivate my staff in embracing both the notion of teamwork and personal development. At that time this was met with a level of cynicism and I recall similar discourses that referred to these changes as the 'latest fad' and criticism around why we suddenly needed teams rather than units and sections. By implication then, it was taken by some members of my 'team' as a criticism that the current system was not working well. Nevertheless I recall one instance where a vociferous critic of the term was in conversation with a colleague who had made the mistake of assuming she belonged to another team. The critic took exception to the incorrect assumption and was quick to point out her true 'team' affiliation, which she clearly designated as superior in ranking. At the time I remember pondering the effectiveness of the word team around workplace identity and in this instance, team pride.

Returning to the Department a number of years later the 'team' as a concept is firmly embedded in its culture and drawn upon to territorially demarcate responsibility. Through the use of pronouns, civil servants fluidly navigate slipping in and out of team membership. For example in Chapter 5, I drew on Veronica's words when she said,

> 'I love my job, it's wonderful, it is. I really, really enjoy it and everybody on the section does which I think is... we are only a small section, but everybody there really enjoys what they do'.

Her words made a marked impression on me, Veronica was one of first civil servants I engaged in conversation with and at the time, her speaking for everyone else surprised me. The sentence is interesting in that she progresses from 'I really, really enjoy it' to 'the section does' and then she seems to pause for thought possibly around whether she can speak on everyone else's behalf or, simply while she considers the size of the section (or team....), before going on to say perhaps more positively that, 'everybody there really enjoys what they do'. At the time I assumed this was an individual assertion by an officer who knew her colleagues well. However as time passed, I noticed this pluralistic way of speaking and assuming the thoughts, views and feelings of colleagues. As might be expected allegiance is first to the team and concentrically ripples out to the Division and then the Department. When I was talking to Ian about the staff survey and the problems around designing questionnaires he told me of some research he had conducted for a study programme he was engaged in. He explained that,

> 'when I did my research the responses to the questions about my team were always more positive than the responses to the question about the organisation or division. 'Because my team are my friends and my family and we do everything pretty well, .. don't we everyone?... so I will give you an eighty-five'. The rest of the division and all the other sides, not so good and the Department very poor'.

This comment reflected my observations and impressions around the cohort. The nature of allegiance was transient and there was fluidity in people's discourse that allowed them to slip between team, divisional or departmental identities. However, such group affiliation also needs to be contextualised around the formation of the HQ site as a community.

The Establishment of a Community

There can be no question that the civil servants on this site were a cohesive community long before the implementation of the Department's HRM strategy. As a site it was first founded in the 1960's largely in factory units on a large local industrial estate. At that time a new building was being constructed that was to house the 'main frame' of the Department's computer system. While the Department building was being completed, a new Labour Government initiative went 'live' and needed an extensive team of clerical administrators. The 'clerical factory' was born appropriately on an industrial estate and as participants told me their career histories, several recalled those 'early days' and the adverse working conditions in which the newly formed HQ workforce operated. The workforce in those early days was largely drawn from the local population of the town in which the HQ is situated and as a consequence the workforce was quite incestuous in nature. As the Department grew it came to be the second largest employer behind that of a large chemical factory. Sometimes whole families could work within the Department in some capacity or other. Bearing this in mind and the adverse conditions in which people initially worked, camaraderie was established alongside a distinct sense of community.

Although the Department continued to grow and people were employed from the surrounding areas or, transferred up to the North West from London, this sense of community has prevailed and in many respects, has been both strengthened through a fear of closure but also fragmented as it experienced high levels of redundancies during the 1990's. Weber (1947:147-148) defines the corporate group as 'a social relationship, which is either closed or limits the admission of outsiders by rules' the regular function of which is validated through a figurehead. In this case the figurehead is ultimately the government and then the departmental minister. However, Weber (1947:149) also identifies a 'territorial corporate group', which is defined through a common set of criteria specific to an area. In respect of HRM there is clear evidence to suggest 'initiative fatigue' at one level, but engagement or embodiment at another. While the Department may at first sight seem less successful in engaging the civil servants with the aims and objectives at a wider or global level, there is no question that they take great pride in delivering their respective services with an enthusiasm for quality. In so doing, they demonstrate their commitment and flexibility to the organisation. However, in respect of the wider picture the resistance around embracing whatever is the 'latest fad' is perhaps indicative of a territorial bias within the Department's shrunken community that not only fears closure but also, takes umbrage at perceived criticism of, tried and tested ways of working in respect of its 'production line'.

Let's talk Family

In this respect then, the HQ community has its own history and culture that is both territorial and familial. Ezzy (2001) makes the point that the institution of the family or a pseudo-family is a useful device in 'engineering' culture. He suggests that through notions of teamwork, the family is drawn upon as a metaphor within organisational culture to provide a moral and value framework. In turn this framework has the power to become a self-disciplining and policing mechanism that exerts pressure and coerces workers in conforming and committing to the organisation.

Before becoming a management guru, Kanter (1972:65) writing about 'Commitment and Community' in respect of new religious groups and movements, said,

> 'These issues can be summarised as one of commitment; that is they reflect how members become committed to the community's work, to its values, and to each other, and how much of their former independence they are willing to suspend in the interests of the group. Committed members work hard,

participate actively, derive love and affection from the communal group, and believe strongly in what the group stands for'.

It is not difficult to see how this equally transfers to an organisational setting or to the traditional construction of the family. While these civil servants do not outwardly profess to be 'onboard' with the dictum of the Department's HRM strategy at an affective level there is evidence to suggest otherwise. There is no question that the civil servants commit to delivering a quality service but perhaps like troublesome teenagers at an affective level they perhaps resent being told what to do or more to the point, what they perceive they are already doing.

Kanter (1972) identifies three types of commitment, cognitive or instrumental commitment, affective commitment and moral commitment and she determines six processes in establishing these. To achieve moral commitment all six processes would need to be transcended. In ascending order, the six processes include: sacrificing something to belong to a group or organisation; investing in that organisation at both an emotional and intellectual level; renunciation of self-interest and thereby eliminating potential threats between individual and organisational needs; communion whereby organisational members are engaged in collective and cohesive activity; mortification through which adherence to organisational values and systems are either consolidated or resisted and finally, transcendence whereby an organisation's ideology, systems and structures are fully and morally internalised (Kanter, 1972). In many respects this model shares commonality with the psychological processes and differences between compliance and conformity. True conformity likewise would mirror the requirements of transcendence whereby an individual rises above questioning or challenging and demonstrates full commitment by internalising an organisation's ideology (Gross, 1996; Mann, 1969). However, compliance is different in that an individual could outwardly obey and appear to commit to an organisation's ideology but in actuality would only be doing for social reasons, for example, to be accepted, to belong or perhaps to pay 'lip service'. Kanter's processes and typology around commitment sit equally well with religious groups and movements, organisations and of course, the family.

We are a family.... er, Team

In many respects as an ethnographer it was necessary for me to process through these stages of commitment in order to become accepted by the Division, the teams and individuals with whom I spent time. A déjà vu moment in returning was re-acquaintance with the sense of community in the HQ site. My initial sample, was the grand total of two key participant volunteers from which my snowball sample grew. Without question this grew partly through recognition of a familiar face. For example, very early in the research accompanying one of the key participants to the staff canteen at lunch time, one of the canteen assistants of whom I had no recollection said 'Oh hello, I haven't seen you for ages, have you been on holiday?' Similar incidents occurred on other occasions when people enquired had I been on secondment or where had I been hiding myself. In many respects I was a returning prodigal daughter and people were anxious to welcome me back into the fold. The irony here was that when I worked there I often felt outside of the fold because originally I was not local to the area. This was because I did not share the same background. For example, many of the Department's staff knew each other from school etc, and consequently I did not share this identity or sense of community.

However, going back necessitated a re-initiation process and a sharing of stories around the intervening years. To a great extent this meant that any barriers around being a researcher were displaced through the sharing of stories from the 'old days'. In many respects then I was an estranged and reunited member of this large family with the department assumed as a patriarchal figurehead. Acceptance as an ethnographer then, necessitates travelling through Kanter's (1972) processes of commitment. In respect of becoming immersed within the culture, my process of organisational commitment ceased at the communion stage whereby I shared a sense of meaningful contact with the participants and the Division but remained an objective observer to the Department, its structure and ideology.

Tea, Cake and Cuddly Toys

In this respect then, both the participants with whom I spent time and their team colleagues were very welcoming. In some respects I became the distant relative who home for a visit was to be materially looked after. During one of my first interactions with one of the participants, I received a warning,

> 'By the way, if you are actually going to be spending any time on our section, if you are dieting, not that I think that you need to then, forget the diet because we always have sweets, cakes and biscuits and everything. ... (name) ... will forcibly go round and shove a cake under your nose and say 'have some!" So any intentions of dieting you have over the next seven months or whatever, out the window if you are on our section. I warn you now!'

The participant suggested I might want to change my mind and 'stick with somebody else' and in many ways I felt that my acceptance of these terms and conditions was something of a challenge around my level of commitment. Whoever I sat with my welfare was always of concern around tea and coffee, biscuits and cakes, chocolate and toffees and the participant was right, it did not help the diet.

Clearly this level of care demonstrated how quickly people were embracing me back into the fold and true immersion was recognised when I ceased to be the visitor or the researcher, and I was able to make tea for whichever team I was with and allowed to do 'the dishes'. The team that specialised in cake prominently displayed their cakes and biscuits on what they referred to as their 'cake table' and sometimes its array caused comment from passers-by from neighbouring teams or 'families'. They in turn would then be invited to partake of their team's hospitality if they so desired.

Civil servants and tea breaks make ideal fodder for humour. However, there is an element of truth around the formal nature of tea breaks in the civil service. Tea breaks are ritualised because they provide a few minutes of welcome time and space away from the work desk and allow people to engage in informal social activity. The HQ building is a relatively new building having outgrown the original construction that was built in the 1960's. It is only three floors in height but it spreads over a large area and is made up of two interconnecting quadrangles. As such then it is a modern design and although there is a small canteen on site, each floor has several small kitchens where people can make drinks, toast and cook food in microwaves. These kitchens provide ideal places for people to come together and the ritual is that people make drinks etc for their whole team. Three people in the kitchen and it is a crowded affair, albeit an ideal place for an ethnographer to get to know people and widen her sample.

Office rituals come in many forms and in this modern space there are rules around the use of the building and how the space was must be maintained. The communication and information network is such that there is a policy or system for most things. For example, when I first entered the Department as an Administrative Assistant in the 1970's I was engaged on the section that formerly operated out of the factory unit on the local industrial estate. Most of my days were spent opening claim forms and part of my induction was to be taught how to open these envelopes and how to date stamp the claim form within. To this day I remain institutionalised in how to open an envelope to its full extent at all three sides thereby ensuring that all contents are revealed and removed. Fortunately today individuals have far more autonomy over mundane tasks, but a legacy of procedural instructions and systems for working do remain in place. For example, desk information cards were received whilst I was there that advised people the correct way to answer the telephone, what Shelley referred to as, 'the silly booklet'.

In respect of the office space, a clear desk policy operates but a tension exists where people resist and challenge what they perceive as unnecessary rules. When the building was opened a decade or so ago, the clear desk policy was introduced in order to maintain the buildings clean, sleek and open plan design. As such there are few walls to decorate and a rule exists that specifies no posters or pictures must be put up. Throughout the building there are however, supporting pillars and during my time there, one of the teams or 'families' I spent time with confided in me that they had already been told off for putting up a poster. Within their team's space they did have a pillar and which they had somewhat daringly put up a calendar. This calendar was of firemen who, largely clothed nevertheless, presented a challenge and risk around appropriateness. While I was in the field it was requested the calendar be removed.

In respect of the clear desk policy, the idea behind this is that all papers, ledgers, books etc should be filed away in locked cabinets. A clear desk also means the cleaning contractors can ensure the desks are polished etc. For the most part, papers are put away but most of the staff have a habit of decorating their desks with bric-a-brac, trinkets etc. In some cases, it is hard to notice the papers because of the plethora of gonks, dolls, figures, ornaments, silk flowers, desk toys and so on. Repeatedly people said to me, 'oh I will have to tidy my desk', 'we have a clear desk policy you know'. In actual fact, you would not know. This was interesting because in many respects it seemed that the staff made their space their own as a way of asserting their identity and their individualism. In one team, desk decoration was a friendly competitive sport and it was interesting how such quality work emanated from such colourfully riotous and chaotic spaces.

The use of rituals of this kind, in many ways cements the informal arrangements and understanding between the team workers. It acted as a cohesive device that united the team workers and often this came in the form of testing the organisation's boundaries around what were perceived as unnecessary rules and policies. Interestingly, individuals who did this, were always keen to tell me of their deviance. In this respect these team members can be likened to the naughty toddlers or teenagers of the family, curiously testing boundaries to see the extent of their autonomy. Kanter (1972:73) suggests,

> 'Communion involves bringing members into meaningful contact with the collective whole, so that they experience the fact of openness with the group and develop a 'we-feeling''.

Communion and the 'we-feeling' knows of course, no boundaries. Whilst such resistance did not necessarily fall into line with the organisation's endorsement of a 'we' behaviour it nevertheless secures the informal arrangement of the team and the Division. Any expectation of criticism were not anticipated from within the Division, but at a site wide level in the form of the team and the Division responsible for 'estates'.

Helen had formerly worked in an agency that at one time was associated with the Department. She had worked in the HQ site for approximately eight years but what had been particularly noticeable to her was the informality between her colleagues in the Division. Of her former agency she said it was,

> 'horrendous very, very stressful and so the way the was going you were under constant pressure and it was horrendous really'.

She recalled how everybody in the agency was trying to get out and after fifteen years she described her exit as 'The Great Escape'. I asked her if she enjoyed working in the HQ site and Helen said,

> 'Yeah everything's so different, I mean its, it took ages to sort of get to realise what the structure of the Department was because ... (agency name) ... is so structured. You have got your hierarchy and everything filters down. That's the one thing that I find very difficult to cope with, with this Department there does not seem to be anything that's joined up'.

This was an interesting comment around the Department structure and perhaps explained to some extent the informality that exists in the HQ site that perhaps encourages people to resist imposed initiatives such as the HR strategy. Valerie added weight to this somewhat, when she was talking around grade and the people she deals with. She said,

> I have not got a problem with that because I have not got the foggiest what grade everybody is. I mean it's probably a bad thing in some ways because as far as I am concerned, just because you are a higher grade you don't automatically get my respect, you have to earn respect and whereas I will accept the fact that OK you are an HEO and there is a certain amount... you can tell me I have got to do, but I will be oblivious to the fact that you are an HEO in the first place. Because it is little things like I could not tell you who the Head of ...(the Department) ... is...'.

The environment is a very informal one and this has evolved over time. For example, when I became a civil servant in the 1970's, people addressed each other as Mr, Mrs or Miss. But this is a community that has evolved and changed significantly over the years. Perhaps most recently this has strengthened the level of camaraderie and perhaps as a sense of family it has experienced the shared loss of nearly seventy five per cent of its workforce. Ritualistic behaviour and the use of artefacts seem to affirm and endorse it as a pseudo family cum team, and strengthened the beliefs, values and attitudes that Schein (1985) and Hofstede (1992) identify as integral to cultures.

Since leaving the field I have kept in touch with several of the key participants and they have added me to their group email lists. One of the key ways they share their beliefs is through jokes and humour hence many of the desk adornments, are 'jokey' in some way. Several times a week and sometimes daily I receive reminders of their humour as they include me in their circulated 'funnies'. This humour in itself affirms their sense of group identity and often the 'funnies', whether jokes or pictures, are in some way often related to either office culture or civil service culture. The circularity of Schein's (1985) model sees such action as reinforcing basic assumptions and reproducing cultural norms at the deepest level. While a tension exists in teasing or testing organisational boundaries it demonstrates the prominence given to the cultural norms of what essentially is a territorial corporate group (Weber, 1947) intent on retaining its informal arrangements and identity within the Department's structured hierarchy.

However, like all families there are internal squabbles. Although, during my fieldwork I only witnessed minor irritations which largely centred around members of the family who felt they were not been listened to. In one instance it was around a difference of opinion about how something should be done in order to maximise quality and ensure delivery. The other instance came out in an interview and identified an underlying resentment about not being heard within the team. Ironically the pluralistic discourse that the teams engage in can also be frustrating and create apathy in some. One participant told me,

> '(Team name) come up with these ideas, they are very sort of enthusiastic, they decide things but then forget to tell us. You know what I mean and I still leave it to them because a lot of the ideas they have are good and they are probably what we would have come up with anyway but that can be a bit irritating sometimes when you think well, were you ever going to tell us... And then when (team name) says we are doing such and such now .... I thought, 'well we weren't last week'. 'Well we are now, we have decided', 'oh ok'. It's, you think oh it's not worth the myther saying anything but we sort of sneak it in, in a roundabout way'.

So the nature of speaking as a collective entity can backfire and cause family rifts and squabbles or as in this case, breed discontent. However, family acrimony aside it would be incorrect to see such affective commitment as purely team based. As with Ian's study where people pledged their allegiance first to their team, then their division and finally, the Department.

The Mother Ship

Ezzy (2001) proposes that the family provides a moral framework that endorses hard work. Alongside Casey (1995), he suggests that in drawing on the family as a metaphor, organisations encourage workplace commitment that resembles the 'Protestant Work Ethic' (Casey, 1995; Ezzy, 2001; Weber, 1902). Ezzy (2001:635) suggests that organisations go beyond goading employees into 'efficiency, dedication and hard work' with the promise of salvation and instead, gratification is aligned alongside a commitment discourse around

> 'emotional satisfaction and the social solidarity obtained from participation in the pseudo-family of the work team'.

This sentiment is echoed through the data. At all levels came people affirmed that they liked to be busy and to do a good job. For example, Suzanne said,

> 'I don't like it when there's not a lot of work I would rather be busy and think right I have got to get that done, get that done because I have got something waiting. Because otherwise I always feel as though the day goes too long'.

However the sentiment of job satisfaction was determined as a key factor that carried them through their working day. When I asked Penny whether she looked to pursue her career through promotion, she said,

> 'No I am not moving out of ...(name of division) ... but I mean if a promotion opportunity came my way I would go for it but I can't, I'm looking for my job satisfaction rather than for my promotion. As I say if it came my way I'd go for it but I would not move out to go for a promotion. I am happy where I am'.

Often people justified in this way that they were not interested in promotion or training because they were very happy in their Division. They like their teams and they enjoyed coming to work. Such justification was often also linked with issues around age. When Helen was asked did she look for promotion and did she embrace training to that end, she said,

> 'I think you get to a certain age and think, I don't want to be developed or challenged any more'.

Penny took a very unselfish approach to training. She too commented on her age she justified her lack enthusiasm as follows,

> 'the opportunities are there and they wouldn't stop me but as I say at my age... I'm sure they would support me and back me but I don't need to. I will save the money and give it to somebody else, let somebody else do it'

Another participant commented that she had made choices around her career, she said,

> 'I was one of these people who chose to stop work and bring my children up and that penalised me. But I would not swap it. As long as I know my job and the things that are around me. If I wanted, I mean the opportunities are here, but I don't need them'.

One member of staff expressed a negative view of the training on offer with the Department, she said,

> 'These training, I mean they send us on training courses and they are nice and you do learn but you come back and you only use about twenty per cent of what you learn. That's all you need is about twenty per cent. So I'd rather learn what I need for my job'

One participant told me that in respect of a member of her staff said,

> 'she's like me, same age as me. She's probably..., if she needs training... she will do it but we tend to go ... you know training on the job sort of thing'

This was interesting because clearly as the conversation unfolded the participant was projecting her own thoughts of training onto her member of staff who as the same age she assumed would think the same as she did thus any training was clearly going to be undertaken on the job. In this respect it affirmed the team habit of talking on behalf of other people. However, in this instance the assumption could of course, be incorrect. Interestingly these views all came from female civil servants of different grades and are representative of similar comments. When I asked Sara who was a middle management grade about whether she felt valued in the organisation, she said,

> 'I have to be honest, I do not take advantage of some of the opportunities available to me, for example I could go on, do a .... (work related course specified)... at Liverpool University and I don't want to basically because there's lots of coursework and I don't feel I want to spend my life doing coursework. I have got a full time job, full time family, full time social life, so I don't want to and I don't feel I need to because I can manage the section without knowing, without being a ...(specialist role specified) ... for example you know, which to me managing this business is... takes common sense and I feel I've got what it takes to manage the team'.

She went on to say,

> ' I don't need that specialism. But the option is there for me if I want to take it up, but I chose not to. And that's not the only thing. I have never been refused since I have been in this post, anything I have asked to attend, I have not been refused and I think most people have plenty of opportunities'.

In this respect clearly some of the cohort are content with what they do and experience a sense of satisfaction that is manageable to them and their lives. When Clive was asked about his job and whether he saw himself a civil servant or as a specialist, he explained, that he consider himself both but his role went beyond that and he drew his job satisfaction at a wider societal level. He said,

> 'but that the two can relate, I see ... (specialist area) ... not as something that earns me money or that gives me status, but as something that allows me to feed something back to society and ...... good at, something I can help with, it's my contribution, I can do that.......................(text omitted)... One of the main reasons I am in the civil service, originally I was in the Department for employment because it gives the opportunity to, it's the social benefit it highlights, the civil service at its best. At its worst, it can be awful but at its best, it can actually be a good thing in society. There are some parts of the civil service I feel slightly more uneasy working for, now I am not quite sure whether that's where I would fit in, but the bits I have been in I have enjoyed working in and I have felt it's been a good thing'

My impression of the cohort in general was that it was important that they derive job satisfaction and while all those I met expressed a desire to do a good job and on the whole to stay busy, much of their job satisfaction seemed linked to the close relationships and rituals they shared with their colleagues and their teams. The only exceptions to this were a few individuals who were part time and, or, worked from home or, their jobs were so specialist that it rarely brought them into contact with others.

However, that is not to suggest that they were unhappy with this and several expressed their job satisfaction through the autonomy that such independent work afforded them. Of those who regularly worked on site and who were actively engaged in pseudo family or team relationships, they also seemed to link their job satisfaction through the rituals that they shared with their colleagues, for example, through humour or shared social activities. Perhaps another measure of job satisfaction and commitment to the Department can be identified through its 'work-life balance' policy and the extent to which staff will go the extra mile in order to ensure quality service and delivery.

Work-Life Balance

Several of the cohort were unaware of the Department's 'work-life balance' policy and those that were aware on the whole shared Matt's view. He said,

> 'I think that, it's very difficult to maintain it. I think it's difficult the higher up you go it gets more and more difficult........................ I've had problems in the past with work life balance, yeah I have and that has affected things in my life'.

When I asked Frank what his thoughts of the policy were, he commented,

> 'Wishful thinking that's what I understand by it'

He continued,

> 'I wouldn't even know what the work-life balance initiative is supposed to mean for me frankly. I know that there are reams of paper and reams of words

on the intranet but I mean realistically work-life balance is supposed to mean you know be gentle with yourself, and it's garbage. The job I do, I more or less have to be in here five days a week. I have got so many financial things to sort out within the next week involving quite large sums of money and I don't know when I am going to find the time. That's partly because we are coming up to the end of the year but it's partly because I have a lot of other stuff to do on top of. I have had extra work added to me this year. I have had extra jobs dropped on me at short notice. It's all ......(long pause) ...... complete pain in the next if you are trying to run something coherent and actually give people what they want on time. The idea of work-life or what work-life balance means, is just pie in the sky'.

The commitment to achieving results and turning around work is demonstrated at all levels, Carol when talking about her staff said,

'I must admit with that particular team they are very open, very honest but I have been amazed on occasions at the lengths they will to. While voicing their discontent with the requests that have been forwarded to them and due to poor planning skills of other people putting extreme pressure on them. Then I walk in the office and somebody, at least one or two of them are sat there very early in the morning to get a customer's job request out, and they were still there when I left the night before. And I may well have been here until half past six or whatever. So there is a contradiction in that respect in that they may voice one thing and then they do everything within their power to help people. If somebody says they have got real pressure their end and it's critical and it's critical to the Department and it's whatever, as I say things about, ...doing their planning, they should be doing, what happened to project manage and blah blah blah blah, but then they pull every stop out'.

Indeed during the shadowing process this was my experience of Helen's team as we spent long days together. For example, one day was an 8.30 am start through to 7 pm in the evening and its fair to say, that some of the team were there considerably before 8.30 that morning.

Clive reported he was not good at work-life balance, he said,

'I have never been very good at that. I get into trouble for, one of the other staff, I sometimes get told off about that. But yes I have to be a little careful sometimes with that. They can feel and I can understand where it comes from that because I tend to be willing just to do things, I really am awful at paperwork I don't like having to do it for annual reports'.

Clive continued by explaining that he is very negligent around the need to fill in forms to do with his pay. For example, his overtime, expenses etc and his annual leave form. He said that although he makes a note of the extra hours he works he often does not claim for them, he continued,

'Sometimes people, I have had the comment from a number of people, well one or two people in particular, that because I am willing to do extra that allows the Department not to employ the right number of people it should and

> this sort of has an effect on the number of jobs and how much overtime people can claim. I can understand that'.

I asked Clive whether his choice to work beyond his normal hours impacted on his health or family life to which he replied,

> 'I can tend to overdo things, yes I can sometimes do that'.

In this respect several of the cohort acknowledged that their work impacted through to their health and their social lives. Fred who was unaware that the Department operated a work-life balance policy echoed comments typical of several of the cohort, he said,

> 'I think work does impede on my time outside work though, ... I sometimes wake up in the night thinking about what I can do here and what I can do there'.

He told me of a post he had held previously and that as a consequence his wife had told him he was,

> 'an absolute nightmare to live with and that work was affecting me outside work'.

As a consequence it was necessary for Fred to change jobs because his wife said he was changing as a person and was becoming angry.

In this respect the dedication of the staff must be indicative of their level of commitment. Whether that commitment is to the Department and related to instrumental commitment or, to respective teams and represents a combination of affective and instrumental commitment is of course, debatable. However, there can be no doubt that the staff, generally, go the extra mile in conducting the Department's business. The Department's work-life policy is held on the Department's intranet but of course, as this cohort have reported, few of them have the time to trawl its screens and see what is on offer.

Getting to Know You

Perhaps Frank's ignorance of the work-life balance policy illustrates the criticism that the Department is guilty of 'information overload'. Anything and everything is on the intranet system via a portal named PRISM. The Department is clearly anxious to share information and likewise it is very active in inviting two-way interaction. For example, the HQ staff were invited a few weeks before Christmas 2002 to attend its HRM strategy seminar, albeit take up from the Division and the Department as a whole was not impressive. Most of the civil servants reported that they were too busy to attend such seminars or to focus on the wealth of information they received. However in one respect staff, are actively encouraged to complete the Department's Staff Survey. In 2000/2001, eighty two percent of the Department's staff dutifully completed this form.

The Department's survey in 2002 spanned fourteen pages. Broken into three parts, Part One (five pages) through multiple-choice boxes requested information 'About Yourself'. Part Three invites 'Your Comments' and provides the opportunity to expand responses around the Department's aims and objectives, for example, 'Delivery'. Part Two, canvasses on 'Your Comments' across a wide range of topics and issues. The questionnaire is interesting both methodologically in terms of its construction and its wording. With built-in falsification, it seeks to clarify whether civil servants understand the Department's strategic framework and its aims and objectives. It also seeks opinion around perceptions of management effectiveness across the various levels in the Department. The questionnaire is highly personalised, as the above headings indicate, for example, 'About Yourself'. This continues throughout the questionnaire and significant emphasis is placed on teamwork. In Part Two, 'Your Opinion', individual opinion is interestingly sought through a collective discourse. For example, it seeks opinion on a five point Likert scale around such statements as,

- My team actively seeks to understand ...
- My team responds promptly to ...
- My team has effective procedures in place to ensure ...
- I believe that my team...
- The people who work with me are willing to help each other, even if it means doing something outside of their normal activities
- I am proud to be a part of the ...(Name of organisation)

In itself the language it uses is interesting as it continues the 'we' theme and whilst it does ask for individual thoughts they inevitably relate to the collective team and are based on the assumption that teams are sufficiently cohesive enough to speak on behalf of their respective team members. The take up for this survey is remarkably high at eighty two percent and is largely determined through the Department's aims and objectives etc. As an independent line of enquiry, the participants in the cohort were asked if they felt valued.

Matt replied that he felt valued,

> 'Within ... (the division) ... I feel they value the work I do and they let me know that they are pleased with what I'm doing'

In respect of the questionnaire, Matt said,

> 'I think that if you like, people like to whinge don't they, do like having a little whinge and I think they feel they can have a whinge but still be quite loyal because normally the results show that people actually quite like working for the department. On reflection they probably are paid about the right rate for the job and that.............probably OK and this sort of thing, if they are honest about it, that's what it shows, things are OK but I am going to have a whinge anyway. So they will get their little digs in which make the people at the top think this is contradictory you know thy say that and are you happy with the training you are getting, yes, does the training budget no, but hang on a minute. How can that be true if they are happy with the training they are getting but we are not spending enough on it. It's just a chance to whinge about things you know. People do feel strongly about little things......People do use it to have a whinge and it always upsets divisional managers when they

> get the results that say you know there's too much communication but my line manager never talks to me.

One participant explained to me that to pass time they had engaged in completing multiple staff survey forms and had done this 'loads of times'. This person filled the survey in, in their own right and as other grades and had completed them both positively and negatively. When I suggested that this counter balanced and cancelled each other out, the person agreed conceding it was 'a good laugh' which gave somebody a job.

Matt was concerned that in some respects the survey results were contradictory and I suggested to him that maybe some of the contradictions represented false or duplicated entries. I asked him whether he it was possible that the results were being manipulated by staff killing time,

> 'Not that I know of. I don't think they do it deliberately I think they just, I think on the big things they probably. I am going to have a whinge and I will whinge about that because that really annoys me'

Although he did advise that,

> 'There were stories weren't there of people being force to fill it in. When it first came out years ago, I remember it being put on my desk saying you will fill it in and you will send it and you will set an example and you will make sure your people fill it in. Sod off was my response to that! The fact was that

> most of them did anyway because they wanted to have a whinge. The turn out, if you want to call it that, has been rising every year. But didn't they exclude, they did something didn't they, they made the results, they had to make sure they got a higher result this year than last year so they made some strange ruling and I can't remember what it was somebody told me about it. They did something different this year to make sure the result came out higher'.

Sue explained that in her opinion there were potential difficulties around anonymity. The first five pages of the form do indeed ask many questions around location, grade, hours etc and so in theory if you work on a small team in a defined area and you happen to be, for example, the only SEO in that area, then issues around anonymity do exist and this matter was raised by several of the cohort. Sue put it like this,

> 'I don't think people are as honest as they want to be. I still think although they say it's anonymous, I don't think it's as anonymous as what they like to think it is... (text omitted) .... You don't have to put your name on it obviously, I always do, and it makes no difference to me because I like to be as honest as I can. But I think some people do worry that it can be traced back to them whatever they put on that form and that they may cause problems, they might get into trouble for what they have said'.

The most common response was echoed through Clive's comments, he reporting feeling,

> 'Valued by the people I work with most closely yes. By the organisation I don't honestly know'.

Clive explained to me that while he felt valued by his immediate colleagues and he wanted to make a social difference around his knowledge and expertise, to be valued by the Department was of less interest to him, he put it like this,

> '(the) "I", that's self-generated it doesn't require other people to value me. I probably don't feel that very strongly actually, it doesn't worry me a lot if the Department doesn't think I. To give you a concreted example, we have now changed the way our annual reporting works from being my line manager saying how he thinks I do my job the reporting is down to me. Apparently I have to write four pages of glowing text on how good a job I do in order that a panel of people who don't know me will be able to assess what I have written and award performance pay as a result of that. This is probably a game I feel no interest in playing. As a result I will probably not get the performance pay and well I will be able to get some work done instead. And that's fine by me. It really isn't going to worry me. Last year I wrote some summary notes on some of the things I have been involved in and my line manager at the time re-wrote that as he thought it needed to be said. Into the sort of 'speak' that needs to be said in order that this panel of people can read it and think of this chap is valuable to the Department and he can have a whatever tick the box

> whatever. I don't think the line manager I have got now does that sort of thing and I don't think I am going to be doing that sort of thing. So I think I will be doing the summary these are some of the things I have been involved in. If you knew actually you might think it mattered but you probably don't know. I have got work to do out here which I think is more important that trying to get some more money for me personally, it's not what I am here for'.

Clive's comment is interesting in many respects, he not only recognises that he has little need for evaluation, he clearly does not use the appraisal system to his advantage. In terms of his commitment and job satisfaction this is derived through his own mechanism around his sense of self. To be valued by others is of little consequence to him.

The staff survey form is clearly intended as a mechanism for the Department to assess the extent to which the Department's staff understand and cohere around the Department's aims, objectives etc and is an indicator around staff attitude. However, within the cohort there seemed a distinct air of disinterest. Generally people filled the survey in although most complained it was too long, lacked assurance it was confidential and most of all doubted the worth of the end product. Further some had never seen or accessed the final results, which added to the sense of apathy around the exercise and for one participant it, was of course, a pass time and a 'bit of a laugh'

To commit or not to commit

This last instance is perhaps a point to ponder. The extent to which the cohort engages in Kanter's (1972) processes of commitment is difficult to determine. In respect of the organisation, the commitment must largely fall into the category of instrumental commitment and in most cases could perhaps be tracked to the mortification process, simply because while people seem to consolidate the organisations values etc, instrumentally progression to this point is probably determined around consequences, for example, punishment or fear of redundancy. Although there are exceptions where risk of punishment is negotiated as in the case of Penny who in the previous chapter, said she would assume a higher box mark on a report to ensure a staff member's pay rise. In respect of team work or the pseudo family, the type of commitment is undoubtedly affective and instrumental and it is debatable here whether in some cases people engage all six processes in Kanter's (1972) model.

In considering the processes of commitment, this chapter has introduced data that focussed on the use of language to construct the team as a pseudo family and it has considered the use of ritualistic behaviour as devices that cohere teams and team working. Finally, it introduced the importance that the Department places on its staff survey form and pursued staff opinion around this. The data suggest that different levels of commitment apply depending on the level of affiliation. At team level clear affective commitment is demonstrated whereas at a Departmental level, the level of commitment is instrumental. In the next chapter, the themes of the data chapters will be pulled together and discussed alongside the effectiveness of HRM as a strategy for change.

Chapter 7

There and Back Again

The aim of this research was to consider the effect of HRM as a force for cultural change in the civil service. As an ex-civil servant originally caught up in a process of such change during the early to mid 1990's it was borne out of a frustration and an enduring curiosity. At that time it seemed a process of change for change sake was ongoing which did not indicate a 'joined-up' narrative. Such fragmentation was frustrating and as a manager I longed to understand the 'bigger' picture. Nearly ten years on, from this research a much clearer understanding of the ongoing project of civil service reform has emerged and it is apparent that HRM plays a pivotal role in its attempt to drive cultural change in the civil service.

This concluding chapter will open by contextualising the civil service's programme of reform. Drawing on theory and data, it will then consider the role of HRM as a strategy and its role in effecting change. From this it will then move on to consider the civil service's, the Department's and the Division's culture. The degree to which HRM has impacted on the everyday working realities of the civil servants in this study will then be discussed. Finally, the key themes of the research will be summarised in a concluding paragraph.

Looking Back, Looking Forward

When exactly the civil service started its gestation is unclear and debateable. Critical turning points in its history were the Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1854), the Playfair Report (1875) and the appointment of Warren Fisher in 1919 as Head of the Civil Service (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pyper, 1995). There are of course, other examples of reform but these by and large are responsible for establishing and implementing a permanent civil service, which sought to recruit fairly within a hierarchically ordered structure.

In the regulated format we know today, the civil service has a history then, of over one hundred and fifty years. Such longevity is important when considering research into cultural change because clearly time plays its part in embedding behaviour and practices within the civil service and in the mindset of its servants. Its history and regulative order has built up a favourable reputation with other countries around the world (Drewry and Butcher, 1991; Pyper, 1995) and this reputation is predicated on its history and inevitably, its civil servants are similarly caught up in that legacy.

However, across its history has been an ongoing call for reform. In whatever format or structure, the civil service has been called into question around its cost, value for money, efficiency and so on. Possibly the most stable of times in its history have been during the preoccupying times of World War I and II respectively. The point of mentioning its turbulent history of reform more generally is to highlight the point that the civil service has never been static and its members are used to constant calls for change. This inevitably affects the way it responds to new initiatives such as Total

Quality Management (TQM), Human Resource Development (HRD) and more recently HRM.

Contemporarily the current Labour Government continues to progress the Thatcher Government's project of modernising the civil service. The current White Paper, 'Civil Service Reform: Delivery and Values' (2004) seeks to transform the civil service into professional and efficient service through a motivated and talented workforce that have a renewed sense of morale. Lying centrally at the heart of this project is the Government's approach to HRM and its strategic plan.

Deconstructing HRM

HRM as a strategic model for managing change and as a strategy rose in popularity during the 1980's and 1990's (Guest, 1987; Legge, 1995; Mabey, Salaman and Storey, 1998). As a counter approach to Taylorism (1911) that sought to control the workforce through exacting management and individual monetary reward, the HR approach of management that arose in the 1930's looked beyond extrinsic reward and looked to inclusive management of personnel wherein, its function was to support personnel by valuing them as individuals. That is, individuals who also had psychological needs alongside the need for monetary gain. This included intrinsic reward, such as job satisfaction (Burnes, 2000, Collins 1998; Mullins, 2002).

The narrative of the HR approach and later HRM is that if talent and potential are nurtured and developed workers will commit to an organisation. As Guest (1987) identified HRM holds the potential for long term and psychological contract wherein an individual exercises self-control rather than external control which is based on commitment rather than compliance. However, HRM has progressed the tenants of the HR approach still further and contemporarily it is employed as a strategic approach to management and employed when change is considered necessary. The project of civil service reform rolls on and HRM strategically plays its part in managing this call, indeed Millar (2004) reported in *Personnel Today* that HR was to play a pivotal roll in reshaping the civil service.

In 1999 the Blair Government reported that,

> '.... public service has for too long been neglected, undervalued and denigrated. It has suffered from a perception that the private sector was always best and the public sector was always inefficient'
>
> ('Modernising Government', (1999): Chap 6, pg 1 http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document.cm43/4310/4310-sm.htm accessed 24/01/05).

In February 2004 when the Turnbull Report on civil service report was launched Prime Minister Blair said,

> 'the duty of any government, is to leave it (the civil service) in better shape than we found it and, as far as possible prepared to meet whatever challenges the future may bring'
>
> ('Civil Service Reform; Delivery and Values Report' (2004:5) www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform/documents/delivery.values.pdf accessed 24/01/05).

This report focussed on several key areas. Summarised these were that: recruitment should embrace equal opportunity and diversity; that a defining characteristic of policy makers and operationalising staff should be professionalism; that the aims and objectives of departments should be clearly defined as corporate functions; that a culture of excellence be appropriated in delivering public functions and finally; that reviewing efficient delivery of public service was an ongoing. The rhetoric of this report supports the main tenants of strategic HRM although which particular model of HRM is in operation is less clear.

As Millar (2004) reported in *Personnel Today*, strategic HRM clearly plays a pivotal roll then, in civil service reform and this is borne out by the Government's drive for reform through the Turnbull Report (2004). At a global level the intention of this report to modernise government is clear, how this disseminates down from Whitehall, to the individual departments and importantly how it is appropriated or assimilated by civil servants is less clear. Legge (1995) identifies that a dichotomous relationship exists around HRM that manifests itself through two models of HRM; a 'hard' model and a 'soft' model. The 'hard' model of HRM tends to be associated with manufacturing industry where productivity and profit can be quantified while the 'soft' model is more person-centred. In short this latter model is more 'touch-feely' in that it has a distinctive discourse that is worker friendly around realising individual potential. In this way,

> 'employers seek a close relationship with workers who become psychologically or emotionally involved with the enterprise'
> (Watson, 2003:109).

However, the distinction between the two models is not always clear. Legge (1995) identifies that neither model is exclusive in its composition and that overlap occurs. How an organisation implements its HRM strategy is dependent on the type of organisation it is and the way in which it is structured. From a top down perspective the Government has a clear and specified agenda for the civil service. Disseminating this to the respective departments relies to some extent on each department's interpretation of the Government's vision and strategy for change.

Dickens (1998) describes HRM as a set of integrated and interlocking policies that cohere a workforce into a particular way of being and behaving. She conceptualises HRM as a set of policies that cohere through, 'strategic integration, flexibility, quality and commitment' (Dickens, 1998:23). Although the civil service is still to a greater extent, unified through for example, its pay and conditions, the autonomy given to departments during the 'downsizing' of the Thatcher years through the process of 'hiving off' and the introduction of 'agency' status, necessarily has consequences. While a global government message of HRM as a strategy for change is clear, how that is disseminated down respective departments and what HRM actually means to the workforce is less clear and it is to this that this chapter now turns.

HRM and the Civil Serivce

Drewry and Butcher, (1991:31) point out that,

> 'the civil service today cannot be understood without constant reference to its past. Many of the mysteries and apparent incongruities of our central

bureaucracy stem from the stubborn resilience of old forms and modes of description'.

While this is a clear reference to the civil service per se at a macro level, this can easily be applied at a micro level. It is that very tradition that makes the civil service unique in that it is steeped in history and ritualistic meaning. Weber (1947) did not propose that legal rationality existed in isolation or a vacuum. Indeed, he acknowledged that the conceptual scheme that he developed in respect of bureaucratic administration was not to the exclusion of 'historical reality'. While undoubtedly rational legal authority is paramount to maintain bureaucratic structure and order, it is necessarily caught up in a history of tradition. Albeit that, that history is in itself based on former administrative systems and codes of practice that were based on legal rational authority. The point is that rationality begets rationality. In respect of the civil service Tony Blair (1999:3) seeks to 'modernise government', by,

1. Creating a more innovative and less risk-averse culture in the civil service
2. Improving collaborative working across organisational boundaries
3. Managing the civil service so as to equip it to meet these challenges
4. Thinking ahead strategically to future priorities.

This list is not exhaustive but the initiatives identified directly apply to the doctrine of HRM strategies. They certainly apply to the researched Department who are already, 'striving for excellence; ensuring opportunity; and realising possibility'. How are they doing this? To meet this, the Department identifies five areas that it recognises it must concentrate on,

- Defining the needs of customers
- Programme and Project Management
- Developing successful partnerships
- Flexible resourcing
- Valuing diversity and developing organisational talent.

In many respects the Department's aims, goals and areas of concern are typical of other government departments and most large organisations. They are also reminiscent of the 'excellence-culture' literature (Peters and Waterman, 1982), which is, formulaic or 'n-step', in its prescriptiveness (Collins, 1998). Progressing these objectives down to a grass roots level brings us to the 'we' behaviours:

- We value diversity and listen
- We seek to learn and improve
- We are committed to making a difference
- We embrace challenge and innovation
- We value openness and honesty

These behaviours at grass root level are instrumental in informing the annual appraisal reporting system of civil servants because theoretically they have to demonstrate to some extent how they put these behaviours into practice in their everyday working activities in order to meet the broader aims and objectives of the Department. Such clarity around expectation sets out to ensure HRM's ideology becomes firmly embedded in departmental culture. Whether it is successful or not is debateable and I will address this question in due course. However, while from a top-down perspective, clarity around objectives, aims etc is clear, however, the autonomy now in existence across civil service departments is likely to mean that the global message of HRM and its interpretation as a unifying force for change across the various departments is likely to be fatally flawed.

Bureaucracy on the scale of the civil service is without question problematic but then is it also too large to be compartmentalised by new strategies that potentially will be replaced by another initiative in a matter of years? Shelley put it like this,

> 'oh we have got this brilliant new thing and we are going to do this and you know full well that either there will be a change of government or a new policy or something else will come in and it will never get there'.

This might seem a very pessimistic and instrumental way of looking at things but introducing new measures that are service wide undoubtedly will lead to problems around dissemination across such a vast structure. Trawling the internet all the key departments in the civil service have their own set of aims, values, objectives etc and there is significant resemblance across the respective discourses engaged. From this then, we can suppose that the drive toward HRM is now standard in the civil service whether individual departments have a similar interpretation is debateable.

The Government refers to civil service morale as at an all time low and the data in this research would suggest that this might well be true. Potentially this could be because the tradition of civil service reform means that civil servants have experienced too much change and that more recently such change is simply too fast. Mabey, Salaman, and Storey (1998) refer to HRM as a 'wrap around' device, which can fuse together different initiatives that seem to be randomly selected on a 'pick and mix' basis. While the Government's drive is to modernise the civil service it begs two questions: which model of HRM are they employing? Secondly how is HRM interpreted at a local level in the Department?

The 'Department's' HRM strategy

The Department's strategy of HRM is highly visible. It engages a discourse of 'sharedness' and collaboration. The Personnel Department, actively encouraged Departmental staff to become engaged in contributing to the Department's HRM strategy though a series of seminars cum workshops. I was allowed to attend one of these where I found attendance was not particularly impressive and once there, audience participation seemed somewhat cynical. Potentially this could have been for several reasons. Firstly this could have been because HRM is perceived as yet another initiative or drive for efficiency and economy. Conversely, attendance means time away from the desk. This is a developmental activity that civil servants can log as personal development in respect of their annual report and engagement other than the benefit of attendance in respect of the appraisal system is not strictly necessary.

At a global level the message of HRM runs cohesively through its internal policies, in respect of pay, promotion etc. However, as this chapter will unpack, many of the staff remain either oblivious to HRM, its message or, they see it as yet another strategy from which they seem to be experiencing 'initiative fatigue'. In truth it begs a question around HRM's originality or at least its component parts. If we look back to classical theory, Taylor's (1947) scientific principles were intended to establish firm management control within the workplace. In essence, whether HRM is so very different is questionable? Essentially whether a hard or soft model of HRM is being applied, it is predicated on the same functionalist principles of creating regulative order and control.

If we fast-forward to contemporary approaches around 'excellent companies' and the n-step guides to which Collins (1998) refers or, to Japanese management, the emphasis rests with successful managers motivating their staff and striving for excellence or team goals. Ideologically HRM holistically harnesses the principles of each of these contemporary approaches. In seeking a workforce to be both flexible and committed it goes beyond the traditional Taylorist (1947) view of workers being only instrumentally driven by material gain, and it elevates them to a position that seems almost consumerist in its approach. Consumerist in that material gain seems to be replaced by material investment and of course, facilitated through the underpinning credentials of 'commitment' and 'flexibility'. Essentially these recipes for successful leadership and thereby 'excellent companies' it could be suggested are reminiscent of Fayolism, (1949) albeit his principles were outwardly more draconian, or perhaps even honest, around the mechanisms of control.

If we look to contemporary approaches of management the discourse of the Department's HRM strategy can be seen at various levels. It seeks to embed an ideology around staff releasing their potential and striving for excellence. It draws in the information or knowledge society, to encourage staff to invest in their skills and thereby in turn, become more valuable organisational resources. The discourse that is employed in the Department is very 'touchy-feely' and in this respect could be identified as a 'soft model' of HRM. However, the overriding problem with HRM in the civil service is that it sits alongside a very rigid structure.

Strategically this is problematic on various levels. If HRM has been influenced by the contemporary management approaches of 'excellent-companies' or 'Japanese Management' it has already been identified that in the case of the excellent-company approach (Peters and Waterman, 1982), the list of criteria is variable, and as Burnes (2000) points out, Peters thrives on his reputation for inconsistency. The Japanese approach on the other hand takes predictably a holistic approach. However, even here the same criteria cannot apply because the idea of a 'job for life' does not necessarily apply in the civil service as it might in a Japanese organisation. Each of these actively encourage flexible units that are acutely aware of their customers' needs.

Many of these ideals are more appropriate to private enterprise where market needs are clearer than perhaps the needs of the civil service's customers or even its own Departments. Many of the participants reported that they did not link the behaviours as being relevant to them because their customers are largely internal customers who in turn, potentially deliver to faceless customers. The point being made is that the product is too remote from the provider and again in this respect, it makes the implementation of HRM less effective.

In this instance an, 'n-step' approach is not necessarily comparing 'like with like' what works in one environment e.g. the business environment, cannot be assumed to work in another environment especially one that is unique in its structure and history as is the case with the civil service (Collins, 1998). Reiterating Alvesson's (2002:1-2) comment,

> 'rationalistic business recipes, have partly replaced culture and the focus on 'people' as the latest fashion for companies and managers during the first half of the 1990's'.

Undoubtedly, at an organisational level the implementation of HRM across the civil service and the Department seems a rational approach but it depends on what its focus of change is. In 'modernising government' it would seem that the Blair Government is looking for a clean sweep that develops a 'less risk averse culture', fosters collaborative partnerships, rewards creativity and innovation and so on. The implication here is that it is the culture of the organisation that is the causal factor that is creating the need for change (Feldman, 1986). Feldman (1986) suggests that when this is assumed, it is further assumed that symbols of meaning need to be changed accordingly to implement and effect wider change.

The problem in the civil service is that it has experienced extensive change and a wide variety of symbols, for example, TQM, have been introduced over a period of time. The succession of such initiatives remains prominent within the memories of civil servants. The successful application of HRM relies on the organisation's members being 'on board' with the need for change in the first place or better yet, even recognise their part in such change. From the cohort in this study the prognosis does not necessarily seem that hopeful and at a cultural level then, it holds the potential to lose its impact. The best way to illustrate their resistance to change is to consider some of the key characteristics of HRM in relation to the stories of some of the civil servants.

HRM and the Department's 'People'

It's a Question of Quality

A key characteristic inherent within HRM is the focus on quality (Dickens, 1998; Legge, 1995). In order to ensure quality, one of Guest's (1978) goals of integration suggested that line managers had to be proactive in leading by example. In this research the management undoubtedly led by example, when it came to hard work and long hours. However, in respect of being au fait with the process of HRM around its integration with the Department's policies around pay etc., there seemed far less recognition around what that meant in practical application and in an ideological sense. Conversely at the other end of the scale some of the more junior members of staff understood that they needed to demonstrate and provide evidence of the Department's behaviours in their FJPs and portfolio of supporting evidence. Possibly in the lower grades this was due to an instrumental approach taken whereby the only way to ensure they demonstrated their organisational commitment and skill was to gather and present evidence that met a specified criteria. A criteria which more senior members of staff were less concerned with because their commitment and skills were more evident through high profile activities.

This demonstrates a mismatch of ideas whereby the system is in place but there is ambiguity or even ignorance around its purpose. In instances such as these, clearly there is a knock on effect around the appraisal system. If the appraisal system is in place to ensure quality then discrepancies such as this only serve to hamper quality. While lower grades seemed more aware of the need to collect evidence that tied in with for example, the behaviours in the HRM strategy and that these ultimately had the potential to impact on their 'box' marking and therein, their performance pay. However, some of the senior grades responsible for processing these reports and reviewing their staffs' performance, seemed less aware of the connectivity with HRM.

Conversely, while some of the lower grades are collecting evidence one of the cohort reported that she would actively resist the system by potentially awarding inflated box markings if it ensured her staff member would receive an annual pay increase. In this respect around processes of commitment then, we can see that affective commitment to a colleague or quasi-family member won out over moral commitment to the Department and in fact, showed a distinct disregard for the organisation in this respect. This is potentially an isolated and somewhat extreme example, but it serves to illustrate that quality is a subjective process and when further enquiry was made as to what the manager would do in a case where the officer did not meet the Department's criteria and was unsatisfactory around quality she advised that she would still not want to jeopardise someone's pay rise and award the necessary box marking that would ensure continued service at an increased rate. Clearly this is a resistant cultural behaviour that is probably less aimed at HRM and more to the Department or civil service as a whole but interestingly nevertheless it illustrates some of the problems the Government and the Department face when trying to effect cultural change.

Quality and the 'Behaviours'

In trying to ensure quality the behaviours in the Department's HRM strategy were greeted by civil servants across a range of emotions from, amusement, cynicism through to abject anger and frustration. Many of the participants described the behaviours as common sense and representative of what they did anyway. In this respect they reported the behaviours as 'buzz words' or the 'latest fad'. By implication they showed little enthusiasm for the behaviours and expressed the view that some of them were 'stupid'. Many of the participants expressed the view that the Department issued too much information and it seemed that many of the cohort, had simply 'switched off' from things that did not seem relevant and which got in the way of their day-to-day activities.

In truth, the Division was constantly engaged in work activity that went above and beyond departmental expectations in respect of work-life balance and this commitment to hard work through long hours created a sub-culture that mutually reinforced itself. This tendency for long-hours echoes the findings of Waterhouse and Lewis (2004) where, similarly the workers in the 'Department of Main Roads', in Australia, were found to be associated with a 'hero-mentality' that indicated organisational commitment through the demonstration of long hours.

The Division is well known in the Department for producing a high quality service and many of the cohort told me of the positive feedback that they receive on a regular basis. In this respect then, the culture within the Division is safe in the knowledge that it meets its target and it does so without referring too much to initiatives like the behaviours or indeed the HRM strategy. This could of course, be linked again to a 'hero-mentality' (Waterhouse and Lewis, 2004) but in truth it could simply be that they have so little regard for the system because they actually embody its message on a daily basis. In this respect then what they perceive as 'common sense' or 'rubbish' only serves to alienate them still further from the wider picture and the dogma of HRM and its behaviours.

Commitment: It's a job

Another key characteristic of HRM is the need to demonstrate organisational commitment. As discussed there are several ways of demonstrating commitment. Civil servants are required to complete a 'Forward Job Plan' (FJP) and to record their achievements throughout the year as evidence for their annual appraisal. Others choose to work long hours and perhaps cultivate a 'hero-mentality' image that is evident to co-workers. Others simply want to do a good job and then go home. HRM makes this difficult. Some of the civil servants were not interested in promotion or further training. When they were in work they were very committed to the Division and worked hard because their co-workers in the division and their customers appreciated their efforts and that was the job satisfaction they needed.

This was an interesting cohort because in many ways the emphasis that is placed on innovation, creativity, releasing potential could serve to be overwhelming for individuals. The rhetoric of the Department and HRM is one of self-improvement, enhancement, empowerment and so on. In this respect this holds the potential to alienate workers, make them feel dissatisfied and even, feel guilty because just doing their job is no longer sufficient. Several of the cohort expressed this view to me and indeed, some who were in the middle to older age bracket explained that they had been in the civil service for 'x' amount of years and they had engaged in considerable training when they were younger. Following this comment they went on to explain that if they later found they needed additional training they knew they could obtain it but at that point in their careers they considered their level of competence was sufficient for the requirements of the job.

However, as part of the FJP process, a positive indicator of commitment and organisational enthusiasm is for the individual to take responsibility around their own development. Several of the cohort also told me that they were grateful for their jobs and that they had hung on to 'a' job during the more difficult downsizing years. Interestingly, a few of the cohort explained to me that they intended to stay in the Division long term and that they had much to be thankful for with regard to the managers who had looked after them. This was not meant in any deviously corrupt sense other than colleagues who had worked together for a number of years had actively sought to carry members of their team with them when new opportunities occurred simply because through their own merit and reputation they were known to be solid hard-working team players .

This question of commitment in respect of HRM is problematic here because the emphasis is on the worker to constantly show enthusiasm and commitment by various means such as training, development and so on and yet, in some civil service jobs, the actual task rarely changes and once training has been undertaken, there is little scope, or even time, to pursue activities that will then inform an impressive FJP or portfolio of evidence. This raises the questions is HRM too exacting around its expectations of worker involvement? Clearly many of the people who took part in this research were totally committed to their job and the quality of their work. However, many had little scope or time with which to engage in what they perceive as 'paper-chasing' activities that simply 'proved' their commitment. Their point was that if they had to 'prove' their commitment they did so through their everyday activity and the quality of the work they produced.

Culture: Can HRM Effect Cultural Change? And should it....?

The global project that the Government seeks to implement is one of change and modernisation. The change as we have seen is at various levels. It is around recruitment of its staff; its professionalism; its departments; its efficiency and it seeks to become a centre of excellence. Huge cultural implications are at work here. Feldman (*1989:587*) suggests that often it is 'assumed that culture is a causal factor in organisational change'. Culture change undoubtedly lies at the heart of the Government's initiative, the problem is that culture is being assumed at a global or generic level without fully engaging with the diversity of culture that exists across the service and its departments.

In Chapter 1 it was established that defining culture in itself is problematic simply because there are so many variables around what culture is made up of and what we actually mean by the term (Brown, 1998; Capon, 2004; Drennan, 1992; Legge, 1995; Martin, 1992). In this instance when the idea of HRM is introduced across the civil service in a generic sense then it ignores culture at a local level. The culture in the Department itself is quite distinct because it recently merged with a larger incoming department which in technical terms was not as advanced in its working practices or its technology as the once former flagship department. This in itself is problematic as two distinct cultures merge there necessarily is a settling in period as the two cultures negotiate their new found identify and mesh together.

So what we have in the frame, is a civil service culture and a newly formed departmental culture, which as the data has shown is still unravelling and finding ways to work together. Within the Department, there are of course, Divisions and in the researched Division there exists another set of sub-cultures made up of the various teams each of which have their own culture. If we consider still further Drennan's twelve key causal factors that shape an organisation's culture, which are,

- 'Influence of a dominant leader
- Company history and tradition
- Technology, products and services
- The industry and its competition
- Customers
- Company expectations
- Information and control systems

- Legislation and company environment
- Procedures and policies
- Rewards systems and measurement
- Organisation and resources
- Goals, values and beliefs' (cited in Brown, 1998:42),

then, it becomes clearly apparent how difficult it is to not only define organisational culture but also how difficult it is to apply such models on a broad scale. While it can be argued that each characteristic can be applied generically at a Government or policy level it becomes more problematic as the culture splits into sub-cultures. For example, at the HQ site level the 'influence of a dominant leader' starts to lose impact particularly during periods of government re-election and or ministerial change and so on. Conversely, from a top-down perspective, there is little chance of full government or ministerial level understanding of what is associated with geographically local community history and tradition. The point that is being made is that implementing HRM as a strategy for cultural change loses its impact both from a top-down and bottom-up perspective on two counts. First the size and scope of the civil service as an organisation makes implementation problematic but so too, do the inherent and diverse sub-cultures that exist within.

A Departmental Community

There exists then, at this HQ site a distinct culture that is related to its history and its geographical location. To draw on Weber's (1947) work there is a sense of a 'territorial group' (Weber, 1947), which works on two levels. It works at the level of the HQ site as a distinct community while in another respect, it works to the benefit of HRM, in that it capitalises on the already existing team or 'familial' social arrangement.

Previously in Chapter 3, it was highlighted that Warren Fisher (1919) encouraged civil servants to work and play together and to that end he arranged for social events that would bring people together as a community. Such organised events still occur at the HQ site. During my fieldwork a 'Summer Fair' was organised for charity and held on grounds adjacent to the HQ building. These events are not commonplace any longer. When the original construction was finished and people decamped from the factory site, the new building had a purpose built bar complete with dance floor. The bar was open at lunch times and in the evening people regularly met up to socialise or take part in the related sports activities. Weekly discos or quiz nights were arranged and this further strengthened the bonds between those employed at the site and their respective families.

More recently the HQ site has decamped yet again, to another state of the art building and in the last few years, the old adjacent building was leased off. As a consequence the staff lost their communal bar and many of the associated social activities with it. Several of the cohort commented on the loss of this in respect of how things had changed and that everything was now work related. The Summer Fair was then, a 'big' event and extremely well attended by varying grades from across the site. This is relevant because the loss of former facilities has actually served to cohere this community still further together although in the process sets up a dichotomous relationship around 'them' (the Department) and 'us'.

In this respect, a processes of 'othering' creeps into the frame. In the initial stages of research, people seemed on their best behaviour but as time passed, a true sense of life at the site was revealed. Initially stories were constructed that were about the 'up-beat' and fun side of life in the civil service. It was only across time that alongside snappy discourses of professionalism that, silences began to emerge. These culminated in wistful looks and sighs about the 'old days' and the 'fun times'. One participant told me,

> 'Pay doesn't bother me. I am grateful. If we are having a pay rise, if it's 2% 1% I don't care, I am grateful for what I have, I think it's because I am the one that comes out to work, you know, I am just grateful I have got a wage'.

This quote refers to a member of staff who reflecting on the 'old days' and all those who had left the Department was clearly grateful that she still had a job. In this environment then, some individuals are just happy to be there either because of domestic circumstance or simply, because they belong to a team who are like family to them and as such, are protective of each other.

Knowing me Knowing you

In respect of community, participants slipped fluidly between their affiliation and identification with their Department, Division and team. First and foremost they identified with their team or pseudo family (Ezzy, 2001). Participants were fiercely protective of each other, for example, when a difficult customer came on the telephone there was always someone there to rally round and say the right thing either to the customer or the 'family' member. In this respect clear evidence of affective commitment was found. In these little teams or families, some engage in social activities outside of the working day, for example, the 'Cinema Club' is a Division wide sub-culture and its membership is extended beyond organisational workers to their family and friends. Sometimes this included genetic family members who also worked within the Department.

Concentrically, these affiliations ripple out then, first to the immediate team, then the Division, then the wider community on the HQ site and lastly to the Department and the civil service as a whole. What was particularly noticeable was the ease with which the cohort negotiate the 'them and us' and the 'they and we' pronouns. Re-applied Hofstede's (1990) concentric circles work well in respect of the above affiliations and social arrangements. Fascinating was the speed with which an individual could slip fluidly from circle to circle depending on the affiliation they negotiated on a given topic at a given time. One clear affiliation was ever present in the Division and not without some clear evidence of 'hero-worshiping'. This was the Divisional Manager who was held universally in the highest of esteem. When things went wrong it was not the Divisional Manager's fault, it was of course the Department's (us versus them). This could of course, be the manifestation of instrumental commitment that and precautionary around taking part in research that had unknown potential. Or similarly it could be instrumental on a 'just in case' basis around issues of pay and self-preservation, but in this instance I suspect neither was the case and genuine affection was apparent for this Divisional leader who was after all, one of 'them'.

Sometimes the site's wider sense of community worked against the wider aims of the Department. For example, sometimes complaints were entered on the Department's electronic notice boards around the site's perceived lack of facilities or the staff survey. However, criticism is a double-edged sword in respect of HRM. The sense of comradeship of the teams or 'pseudo families' decidedly works in favour of the Department because however much angst there might be toward the Department, it simply works to cohere the team. In this respect Ezzy (2001) suggests that the pseudo family comes into its own, in that well cohered teams work harder together through a shared sense of community and thereby, the task in hand. In this respect they negotiate their value framework, which subsequently serves as a self-policing mechanism. During my observations it was obvious that members of teams stayed late to help colleagues with specific tasks, as one of them said, 'we are a nice little family and we look out for each other' and indeed, they do.

Ezzy (2001) drawing on the work of Casey (1995) suggests that through such tight knit arrangements the principles of the Protestant Work Ethic (Weber, 1902) come into play. To some extent I would support that. Amongst some of the cohort particularly at the less senior grade level there was evidence that if individuals worked hard, they would be rewarded, or perhaps retained or looked after in adversity. Several participants particularly females simply wanted to earn enough money for the job that they did. For them that in it-self, was enough reward alongside their personal satisfaction of knowing they did a good job. In this respect there was almost a sense of the Department as a patriarchal figure who would take care of them.

Ackroyd and Crowdy, (1990) studying the slaugtermen in an abattoir found that the notion of hard work was deeply embedded in a distinctive class and regional culture. They suggested that 'autonomous working is

> ''unofficial' and 'excellent' work performance is clearly for the group and not for the bosses' (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990:3).

They proposed that much of this culture

> 'cannot be explained by (and is in fact highly resistant to) management action' (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990:3).

This supports Feldman's (1982) premise that at the heart of cultural symbolism lies its context and that in order to effect cultural change, it is necessary to first look to its location and the symbols already inherent within. Ezzy (2000) suggests that HRM capitalises on the notion of a 'psuedo-family' who work and play together and, to that end achieve a common goal that supports organisational objectives etc. But the metaphor of family and a distinct culture already exists in this environment and has been built up over the last four plus decades. Indeed the notion of family is so prevalent, that in some case genetic families crossing over several generations are or have been employed in the Department. Probably one of the most enduring contributory factors around this sense of family and community are the ritualistic behaviours in which civil servants engage.

A Ritualistic Affair

Probably the most entertaining aspect of the research if indeed, research should be entertaining, was the use of ritual to create meaning in the every day lives of the civil servants. As discussed earlier, these took many shapes and forms. For example, through tea making rituals and through the hobby of collecting individual artefacts that, were proudly displayed on desktops and windowsills (Brown, 1998; Legge, 1995; Schein, 1985). Desktops and windowsills that should, of course, remain clear spaces according to site doctrine. The use of rituals was interesting because the participants were keen to show their wares and to tell me of their history. For example, who on the section had bought what for them, where they had bought it and why they had bought it. In other words why it was a special purchase.

One of my participants was lucky enough to have her own wall where duly placed was an aging print. But the point was it was her print and it was an acceptable print, which neatly framed print, added to its acceptability and conformed to regulatory control. Wherever she roamed the print went too. Often these possessions were used and placed at various points as a gentle test to see if the site's rules would be enforced, an example of this was the calendar made up of partially clad 'hunks'.

Ritualistic behaviour such as this clearly affirmed a sense of community and family. It served to bind people together and often affirm a shared past. This was often echoed through the use of discourse, whereby people regularly lapse into 'well we used to (this) ...... but now we do (that) ......' and often clarification was sought from other team members who would affirm this point and embed still further a shared sense of identity and affiliation. One of the things that I noticed as missing from prevalent discourse were phrases such as 'well we've always done it that way....'. In my former service I recall vividly how ritualistically people slipped into this mantra that seemed to justify resistance to change. During the research period I heard this very little and it would seem that individuals question less the need for change. Whether this is because within the Department there now exists more opportunity for individual change, or that change is so prevalent that causes little reaction or whether a wider strategy of change brought about by such initiatives as HRM is debateable but in the final section of data it is worthy of note.

Flying High

The Division in which the research was undertaken is a fairly creative division in that its activities are quite varied and distinct in nature. Gone are the days of the 'clerical factory' where everybody sits performing the same task hour on hour. The individuality that the Department's HRM strategy encourages is to some extent unleashed in this environment. People are given licence to try new things, to challenge 'ways of doing' things and so on. However, the empowerment that HRM advocates is something of an anomaly. In terms of structure and agency in a hierarchical institution such as the Department, the extent of opportunity in this sense is limited. While the discourse of HRM is around self-empowerment, self-actualisation, learning and so, this opportunity is mostly confined within the team. Opportunities may be found if civil servants wish to attend ad hoc meetings which may personally be of interest or, if they wish to attend a seminar series etc and there are of course, opportunities around training. However, for some grades this unleashing of potential does not extend far beyond the concerns of the team, simply because of a lack of opportunity.

In respect of training, much of this is conducted through the use of CD-Roms which people use at their desks. I interviewed several civil servants who were signed up for various programmes. The training on offer is contemporarily more restricted in scope than it used to be and today is predominately confined to areas that are advantageous to the Department and the work in hand. Of those signed up for such programmes, they reported the reality of finding the time to engage with the packages at their desk highly problematic and inevitably work took priority. The tendency existed suspend training programmes or packages until more time was available.

However, around personal development a consumerist discourse seemed to be in operation whereby people were encouraged to consider doing extra training in order to enhance their skills and therein, their promotability, still further. The problem is that in respect of individual agency, the opportunity, particularly in the less senior grades, is limited and thwarted still further by lack of time. However, the imperative exists that individuals should seek these opportunities as a normal and natural pursuit in working environment. In its doctrine this imperative is somewhat evangelical in its emphasis to harness a 'new age' discourse around self-betterment, empowerment, etc., through knowledge and self-discovery.

However, for some in the cohort, such pursuit was problematic because of their personal lives and their domestic responsibility, which in turn often prevented them from demonstrating their commitment in this respect. Dickens, (1998) makes the point that HRM is a gendered mechanism, through which expectation around levels of commitment and flexibility are unreasonably exceeded and which subsequently have an impact in the personal lives of workers.

The data would concur with this view. Several of the women who took part in the study suggested that they could not make the personal commitment required because of domestic responsibility. For example, women with small children, or older or disabled relatives who needed care, acknowledged that they were not in a position to jump on a train to London, the following day if the need arose or could drop everything domestically to work an extra long day if the need arose in order to accelerate a customer's deadline. In this respect HRM has a negative impact and comments such as those made by some of the women who counted themselves out of the 'running' because of their age and, or, because of their domestic responsibilities, clearly fall victim to the 'high level' commitment demands (Watson, 2003) of the organisation. Dicken's (1998) describes how HRM although claiming to be gender neutral does in fact perpetuate gendered processes and the evidence drawn from the data in this respect does support that view and indeed, actually goes against the Department's 'work-life' balance policy.

Emergent Key Themes

The initial aim of this research was to investigate how change was communicated in a civil service department. As the study progressed through the stories of the civil servants who took part in this research a common thread emerged that revealed the key force for change in the Department was HRM and that the Department's HRM strategy that was informed more widely by the Blair Government's ongoing project of modernising the civil service. HRM as a force for change emerged in Phase One of the research and this became the central focus for Phase Two of the research.

HRM

Civil servants were specifically asked about the Department's HRM strategy and overall, most did not see its connection with them or their duties. At best it was the latest management 'fad' or 'common sense'. At worst it was said to be 'patronising' or 'insulting'. However, while some of the cohort resisted the Departments' integrated policies and rules, for example, through appraisal procedures or clear desk policy, the over-riding conclusion is that most of the civil servants do not engage with HRM at a philosophical level. In practical application then, the civil servants tend to ignore what they perceive as its patronising rhetoric. However, in reality this is potentially because they are largely unaware that in their everyday activities they actually already embody its ethos. In other words its message is preaching to the converted. In this instance this could well be because this was a flagship department and already had a pre-existing culture that strove for quality, flexibility, hard work and commitment. In this instance then, the introduction of yet another initiative seems to have evoked a sense of 'initiative fatigue'.

Legge (1995) points out that HRM in itself is a modernist project that sets out to ensure control and regulative order. In this respect then it is a functionalist model or what Martin (1992), would refer to as an integrationist approach that assumes a homogenous and harmonious social order that is consensual and cohesive in nature. From the data it is clear that the 'initiative fatigue' comes at the end of a long line of initiatives that have gone before. Undoubtedly these initiatives over time have had a lasting effect on the Department's way of working, for example, in the ten years since I personally left the Department, the concept and word 'professionalism' has been fully appropriated within its discourse and today in some instances, civil servants at a relatively junior level refer to themselves as professionals. This is of course, not isolated just to the civil service because the word professional is now becoming increasingly evident in wider society.

However, the implication is that the civil service needs a strategy to light the way in this regard. The attributions of professionalism manifest through the qualities that HRM advocates that is, through commitment, flexibility and quality and these are inextricably tied up through the integration of departmental and government policy. The Department and its HQ site has, traditionally been known for its high level of flexibility and commitment and for the quality work it produces and in this respect has the reputation of a 'flag-ship' department. Potentially it could be argued that this is because it has always lead the way in initiatives such as HRM.

The civil servants on this site demonstrate their commitment by working long hours, which for some interfere with their homes lives and indicate a work-life imbalance. This has now become the norm and as a consequence whether that renders the model of HRM as 'soft' or 'hard' is a little debatable. If things are 'not what they used to be' and civil servants are increasingly demonstrating their loyalty to the Department through excessive hours then a harder version of HRM been more successful than is at first apparent. Legge (1995) identifies that the boundaries between 'hard' and 'soft' models of HRM are blurred. The Department's strategy meets many of Guest's (1987) defining characteristics. The exception being that it cannot really qualify as an 'organic rather than a bureaucratic structure'. Or can it?

As a hard 'model' of HRM its bureaucratic structure is the very thing that ensures its success around integrating and implementing its policies around performance pay etc., albeit that with autonomous departments they are now able to determine some rates of pay etc. But in respect of binding together workers through a meritocratic system of extrinsic monetary reward then HRM fits the bill, although that structure of pay and promotion was firmly established within the structure of the civil service formerly.

However staying with the 'blurriness' of 'hard' and 'soft' models, a soft model of HRM places a much greater degree of responsibility with the worker. For example, individuals now need to take control of their own destiny, through evidence providing, training etc. Importantly then, HRM forces individuals to demonstrate their commitment, their flexibility and the quality of their output through compiling evidence etc. If HRM as Legge (1995) suggests is a modernist construct that coerces control and regulative order, a 'soft' model draws on post-structuralism to drive home a discourse which in many respects is evangelical around self-responsibility, self-empowerment and so on. In other words it seems to have its cake and eat it. And yet aside from cohering and integrating an internal set of policies that enculturates a specific way of working, it does so by attempting to change culture. The implication here being as Feldman (1986) points out is that there is something wrong with a culture in the first place.

In the case of this cohort, HRM as a vehicle for promoting professionalism, accountability and quality seems to make its impact. Further bearing in mind the history of this department as a 'flag-ship' department that has embraced change despite apparent 'initiative fatigue', a 'drip-drip' effect does seem to have impacted on its ways of working over the last ten years. However, the data would suggest that civil servants are in truth more critical of attempts to change its culture than its working practices. This site has always demonstrated its wider commitment to the Department on a daily basis through its reputation to step in with large national projects that have needed rescuing. Whether that commitment and the reputation that has been built up over the last four and half decades is driven by team loyalty and affective commitment processes or whether it is driven by Departmental loyalty, is questionable.

The point is that a key theme to emerge is that workers on this site do not take kindly to the implication that theirs is a culture that needs change. At some levels this is because they perceive things like the 'behaviours' as patronising and a criticism that these behaviours are not already in place. At another level they have a proven track record of delivering quality work and as a site that is remote from the public, they do not seem to recognise their role in the chain of events in this respect. A further point that is worthy of note in respect of attempting to change the sites culture is that this site has endured much change at the expense of other sites and as such it has a very tight community that is nervous of further job cuts.

To pick up on this point then, changing culture is not easy simply because we cannot agree on how to define or categorise culture (Brown, 1998; Legge, 1995; Martin, 1992). Both Schein (1985) and Hofstede's (1992) models of how culture is reproduced are limited in this respect because they do not account for all mitigating variables. To go full circle in this instance, the civil service is not only a vast institution steeped in history, tradition and in what seems like an never ending programme of reform but in its structure and, its existing culture and sub-cultures within, it is extraordinarily complex.

So to conclude, HRM as a force for change, does make its impact felt by civil servants in this division. In terms of performance pay, civil servants cannot ignore its integration via the performance and promotion system that is in place and which strategically incorporates HRM. It impacts then through the material realities of civil servants. In practical terms its doctrine is greeted across various levels of emotion sometimes with humour and cynicism and, sometimes with anger and frustration. I think it is true to say that the latter emotions are borne out of a frustration because while some see little relevance of HRM in their working realities, many of the civil servants recognise that they actually embody the good practices of HRM already and hence patronisation sets in.

However, it would be untrue to say that its impact is not felt practically also, because despite the apparent 'initiative fatigue' that is in evidence I would suggest that like the many initiatives that have gone before it, until such time as it is replaced with a new management strategy, it will continue to have a 'drip drip' effect on civil servants both in a cultural and ideological sense and inevitably this does impact on working practices. Perhaps, a cautionary recommendation would be to let HRM settle into place before introducing yet another thread or strand. Clearly within the civil service its history of reform has taken its toll and there is clear evidence that there has been too much change over too short a period of time particularly, over the last two decades. Hence, 'initiative fatigue' is clearly in evidence and such fatigue more generally is likely to become ever more resistant to change.

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Appendix 1

Fayol - Principles of Management

1.	**Division of work.** The object is to produce more and better work from the same effort, and the advantages of specialisation. However, there are limits to division of work which experience and a sense of proportion tell us should not be exceeded.
2	**Authority and responsibility.** Responsibility is the corollary of authority. Wherever authority is exercised. Responsibility arises. The application of sanctions is essential to good management, and is needed to encourage useful actions and to discourage their opposite. The best safeguard against abuse of authority is the personal integrity of the manager.
3	**Discipline** is essential for the efficient operation of the organisation. Discipline is in essence the outward mark of respect for agreements between the organisation and its members. The manager must decide on the most appropriate forms of sanction in case of offences against the discipline.
4	**Unity of command.** In any action an employee should receive orders from one superior only; if not, authority is undermined and discipline, order and stability threatened. Dual command is a perpetual source of conflicts.
5	**Unity of direction.** In order to provide for unity of action, co-ordination and focusing of effort, there should be one head and one plan for any group of activities with the same objective.
6	**Subordination of individual interest to general interest.** The interest of the organisation should dominate individual or group interests.
7	**Remuneration of personnel.** Remuneration should as far as possible satisfy both employee and employer. Methods of payment can influence organisational performance and the method should be fair and should encourage keenness by rewarding well-directed effort, but not lead to overpayment.
8	**Centralisation** is always present to some extent in any organisation. The degree of centralisation is a question of proportion and will vary in particular organisations.
9	**Scalar chain.** The chain of superiors from the ultimate authority to the lowest ranks. Respect for line authority must be reconciled with activities which require urgent action, and with the need to provide for some measure of initiative at all levels of authority.
10	**Order.** This includes material order and social order. The object of material order is avoidance of loss. There should be an appointed place for each thing, and each think in its appointed place. Social order involves an appointed place for each employee, and each employee in his or her appointed place. Social

	order requires good organisation and good selection.
11	**Equity.** The desire for equity and for equality of treatment are aspirations to be taken into account in dealing with employees throughout all levels of the scalar chain.
12	**Stability of tenure of personnel.** Generally prosperous organisations have stable managerial personnel, but changes of personnel are inevitable and stability of tenure is a question of proportion.
13	**Initiative.** This represents a source of strength for the organisation and should be encouraged and developed. Tact and integrity are required to promote initiative and to retain respect for authority and discipline.
14	**Esprit de corps** should be fostered as harmony and unity among members of the organisation is a great strength in the organisation. The principle of unity of command should be observed. It is necessary to avoid the dangers of divide and rule of one's own team, and the abuse of written communication. Wherever possible verbal contacts should be used.

Source: Mullins, L.J. (2002:172-173): *Management and Organisational Behaviour.* London: Prentice Hall Financial Times.

Appendix 2

Peters and Waterman's Eight Attributes for Excellent Companies

(Adapted from Collins, 1998:42-43)

Attribute	Defining Characteristics
A bias for action	Excellent companies do not suffer from 'paralysis by analysis' and make little use of committees. Instead they prefer to use teams and other ad hoc structures so that innovative decisions can be made promptly.
Close to the customer	Excellent companies focus upon meeting and exceeding the expectations of their customers.
Autonomy and entrepreneurship	Excellent companies value innovation. To encourage this, departments and organisations tend to be broken down into small autonomous units.
Productivity through people	Excellent companies recognise and commit to the idea that people are the single most important asset in the company and policies and reward structures in excellent companies are designed to reflect this.
Hands-on, value driven	Leaders rather than managers of excellent companies maintain close contact with both staff and customers and work to foster values (such as commitment), which, in a devolved system of managerial leadership are said to be vital for business success.
Stick to the knitting	Excellent companies thrive because they remain focused upon their customers and at all times keep in mind what the organisation actually does more effectively than its competitors.
Simple form, lean staff	Excellent companies are staffed by skilled and committed, men and women. The absence of a need for detailed supervision and the absence of a whole complex of committees mean that the organisation can direct its energies to action and to satisfying its customers.
Loose-tight properties	Excellent companies require loyalty and commitment yet reward these attributes by granting a considerable degree of freedom and autonomy. The management control systems of excellent companies therefore, are simultaneously loose and tight.

Appendix 3

Table 3 Participant *Pseudonym and Grade Listing*

Participant Listing

Type of participant	2nd Assigned Psuedo
Key	*Valerie*
Key	Julie
Key	Stuart
Key	Tim
Key	Dominic
Key	Derek
Peripheral	Penny
Peripheral	Helen
Peripheral	Sara
Peripheral	Keith
Peripheral	Fred
Peripheral	Matt
Peripheral	Jenny
Peripheral	Suzanne
Peripheral	Ian
Peripheral	Felicity
Peripheral	Shelley
Peripheral	Neil
Peripheral	Frank
Peripheral	Sebastian
Peripheral	Sue
Peripheral	Carol
Peripheral	Clive
Peripheral	Roy

Grade Listing

Grade	Number of Participants
Grade 6 + 7	2
Senior Executive Officers (SEOs)	3
Higher Executive Officers (HEOs)	7
Executive Officers (EOs)	5
Administrative Officers (AOs)	7
Total	24

Appendix 4

Table 4 List of Civil Service Non-Industrial Grades

Senior Civil Service Grades	
Grade 1	Permanent Secretary
Grade 2	Deputy Secretary
Grade 3	Under Secretary
Grade 4	
Grade 5	
Grade 6	
Grade 7	
Administrative Group	
Senior Executive Officer	SEO
Higher Executive Officer	HEO
Executive Officer	EO
Administrative Officer	AO
Administrative Assistant	AA

Appendix 5

Table 5

% Number of Industrial and Non Industrial Staff between 1951 - 1986

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1986
Industrial	399.6	357.8	201.7	149.7	96.2
Non-Industrial	675.4	650.2	498.4	539.9	498.2
Total	1,075.0	1,008.0	700.1	689.6	594.4
Industrials as % of total	37.2	35.5	28.8	21.7	16.2

Source: Annual Abstracts of Statistics; 1952,1962, 1972 and 1987
Cited in Drewry, G. & Butcher, T. (1991:59): *The Civil Service Today*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Table 6

Industrial and Non-Industrial Staff in the Civil Service between 1979 – 1988
(full time equivalents in thousands)

Year	Industrial	Non-Industrial	Total
1979	166	566	732
1980	157	547	704
1981	150	540	690
1982	138	528	666
1983	130	519	649
1984	120	504	624
1985	101	498	599
1986	96	498	594
1987	90	507	598
1988	73	507	580

Source: Civil Service Statistics 1988-1989
Cited in Drewry, G. & Butcher, T. (1991:59): *The Civil Service Today*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Appendix 6

Table 7 Civil Service Staffing Trends 1994 – 2004

April 1994	559,440
April 2003	540,830
Oct 2003	543,770
April 2004	554,110

Source:
www.civilservice.gov.uk/management*information/statistical* /information/statistics/publication/pdf/mediabrief.pdf