PAPER 23

Politics, conflict and culture

Tim Dalmau and Bob Dick (1990) *Politics, conflict and culture: concepts for cultural change.* Chapel Hill: Interchange.

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To every complex problem there is a simple solution and it is always wrong.

— attributed to H.L. Mencken

A very old Chinese Taoist story describes a farmer in a poor country village. He was considered very well-to-do, because he owned a horse which he used for ploughing and for transportation. One day his horse ran away. All his neighbours exclaimed how terrible this was, but the farmer simply said "Maybe".

A few days later the horse returned and brought two wild horses with it. The neighbours all rejoiced at his good fortune, but the farmer just said "Maybe".

The next day the farmer's son tried to ride one of the wild horses; the horse threw him and broke his leg. The neighbours all offered their sympathy for his misfortune, but the farmer again said "Maybe".

The next week conscription officers came to the village to take young men for the army. They rejected the farmer's son because of his broken leg. When the neighbours told him how lucky he was, the farmer replied "Maybe". ...

— Bandler, R. and Grinder J.: *Reframing*.

(Real People Press, Moab, Utah, 1982)

Preface

This is one of a number of monographs which we have used to refine our ideas on the culture of social systems and how it can be changed. We presented an earlier version of it at the AITD Queensland Branch Conference known as Network '87. In sequence it fits between A diagnostic model, which we presented in Brisbane at Network '85, and *From the profane to the sacred*, presented at Network '89 in Adelaide. (Yes, we have plans for Network '91, if it takes place.) Fittingly enough, all of them build on a paper one of us (Tim) gave at Seminar '83, organised in Melbourne by the Melbourne OD Network, and a precursor of the Network series of conferences.

It has been of interest to us to note how the literature on culture has changed over that time. It is a more respectable topic now than it was then; and it acknowledges more readily the relationship between culture and social system effectiveness. Culture's time as a fad began about 1983, and is almost past; and to our mind that is cause for celebration. Our only fear is that it as it becomes an established discipline, it may go the way of many disciplines by slowly declining into triviality.

Over the same period our own ideas have developed too. If you were to trace the evolution of the life-cycle model and its applications over that time, it would be clear just how much, and how often, we have changed our mind. That is still true. We expect that our Network '91 paper, if there is a Network '91, will be different again. That said, we have chosen to stand by the broad details of much of what we said in the original version of this monograph. We have refined many of the details, and we don't think we expressed very well the relationships between the different models we described; but we still find the models useful. What has happened in the meantime has been mainly fine tuning.

The ideas, in fact, have been confirmed by our practical experience since the original paper. Cultural change is more often attempted; and we have had the chance to pursue our ideas and techniques more often in practice. This is not to say that we are now satisfied with them, but we do find them valuable in our consultancy work.

If the general form of our ideas is largely the same, the monograph itself has been revised throughout. We have discovered yet more typos (will they never be eradicated?), yet more awkward or ambiguous sentences, and particularly some awkward links between segments. We hope that these are now somewhat improved. In the course of revision, the monograph has been extended substantially.

We were at first uncertain how much of a revision to undertake. It has always been our intention to make the most of the advantages of desktop publishing, using low print runs and revising our views in the light of our ongoing experience. Our views about the material in the monograph have changed somewhat since the first edition, so a revision is certainly in order.

On the other hand, there are documents which we have written between the first and second editions of this monograph. To incorporate all of our ideas since then would turn this into a book. And, even if we had time for that, we are not sure that we are ready for it. What we have done, therefore, is to remain mostly true to the earlier structure. We address the same issues in this edition as we did in the previous one. We have incorporated within that structure our present thinking on culture. This has led to some expansion of the early material in the monograph.

We resisted a temptation to expand the material on cultural intervention. That has been addressed in *To tame a unicorn* (which exists only in an abridged edition because we have more to say about that, but haven't yet found the time to do so). The emphasis in this monograph therefore remains on conceptual material

which can be used for application. *Unicorn* is still the best source of information on the applications.

However, you will find that the models here will help you think about culture. If you are, or intend to be, a cultural diagnostician or change agent, we think you will find that they have immediate and practical applications which will make them valuable.

Prelude

We have been thinking for well over a decade now about such issues as social and organisational change, conflict and power. About ten years ago we both became interested in the study of the culture of organisations and other social systems.social change We found that ideas about culture aided our understanding of other social phenomena. (In what follows we will often talk for convenience about "organisational culture" or "corporate culture"; we intend this term to encompass the culture of social systems of many types.)

Peters' and Waterman's book *In search of excellence*, with its emphasis on a service orientation, helped to popularise cultural change. During the early years of our interest in culture, it had not yet arrived on the scene. We could count on the fingers of two hands the books and articles that we could easily find on the topic. When coming to research the first version of this monograph just the reverse was true — we were almost overwhelmed by the volume of written material available on organisational culture. Much of the literature appeared during the first half of the 1980s. There have been additions to it since then, though much of the seminal work still dates from the early 1980s.

In the course of interpreting this material and putting together our ideas we have come to understand better some of the models and practices we have been using for some time.

The increasing interest in organisational culture in the space of ten years has been quite dramatic. It perhaps reflects a number of wider trends in society at large.

At the very least it seems to represent the "high tech/high touch" paradox which John Naisbitt so clearly illustrates in *Megatrends* (Naisbitt, p39-54). Perhaps, as our organisations (of many types) become more and more places of high technology, their people seek a counterbalancing response: "to balance the material wonders of technology with the spiritual demands of our human nature" (ibid, p40).

Another parallel development is a proportional rise in what Barry Jones calls the quaternary sector of the economy. The common element of the quaternary sector is the "processing of symbols and/or symbolic objects" (Jones, 1983, p48). It includes teaching, research, office work, public service, communication companies and technologies. Important here are the media: the systems and organisations which process sounds, images, numbers ... symbolic information. We feel sure, that were he alive today, Carl Jung would see a parallel developing interest in matters to do with the cultural life of human systems: their symbolic life.

Perhaps, too, this trend represents a search for new responses to new problems. The old solutions do not seem to work as well as they once did: the rate of change has rendered many of them obsolete. The cultural developments taking place in the developed world may eventually have dramatic impact. We suspect they may represent a watershed in human affairs—the second watershed, we call it later.

Along with the growing interest in organisational culture, two major dilemmas have arisen. Firstly, there seems to be little agreement within the literature as to

what "culture" actually is when applied to social systems. There are many different definitions and perspectives on this topic.

They range from very narrow definitions to quite broad ones which leave the writer seemingly overwhelmed by "the burden of comprehensiveness" (Louis, p83). It is such a complex field of study, it seems, that it is difficult for any one paper or writer on the topic to do it justice.

Secondly, we are dealing with what may be called a "soft" area of behaviour, not easily amenable to rigorous quantification. Culture is a bit like an object in night vision: if you look directly at it, it disappears. Indirect methods of study are needed. In fact many of the methods for cultural diagnosis and intervention are so indirect that they strike some people as fanciful. As do Pennings and Gresov (p 318), we often find in the literature some confusion between the subject of organisational culture and the method for studying it.

To this we would add a confusion between culture and its behavioural expression. In this monograph we go some way towards reducing that confusion.

As far as the "burden of comprehensiveness" is concerned, we have some misgivings about parts of our earlier work. Any theory or model is a simplification. In essence that is what theories and models are. There is thus a trade-off to be faced between breadth and its consequent imprecision on the one hand, and precision and its accompanying narrowness on the other.

In hindsight we have misgivings about some of our earlier formulations (Dalmau, 1983; Dalmau and Dick, 1986a). We fell into the trap of sacrificing too much precision in the interests of too broad a boundary of application. We hope this document lessens some of the imprecision.

This is not to say that we offer this as a final product. In fact, our thoughts about the relationship between culture, politics and conflict are still very much "in journey". This, we think, is desirable.

Part of the difficulty lies in studying something which operates outside rationality. One of the results has been the resurgence of what Barry Turner calls the "pop culture magicians" (1986: p104). This still disturbs us as much as it did when we wrote the first edition. Perhaps as culture loses its status as a fad they will move on to greener pastures.

We are also disturbed by the number of large corporations (including some in the public sector) who have been seduced into expensive investment in such "magic". We would prefer to be examples of Turner's "honest grapplers".

To this end, we invite you to engage with us in grappling with these issues. We would be pleased if you regarded what follows as tentative, almost certainly subject to further revision. We welcome dialogue with you.

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Our views about the nature of culture are, like much else, still undergoing change. This remains the initial focus of this monograph. Despite our caveats earlier about over-inclusiveness, we are reluctant to adopt too narrow a perspective. Reach behind almost any social phenomenon, no matter how apparently simple, and there you will find a tangle of connections linking most of the social world to most of the rest of the social world. In what follows it is our intention to unravel some of the tangle.

Our examination of the tangle begins with a consideration of the nature of culture. To do this we draw upon the burgeoning literature on organisational culture, and our earlier views. We also present here some of the basic assumptions underlying our own views.

In the second part of the monograph, we consider some specific models with implications for researcher and practitioner. Three models are considered in some detail, working from general to more specific. The evolution of social cultures is addressed using the second watershed as a theoretical vehicle. A

model of cultural styles is offered. We describe and categorise various processes. An extension of the Thomas-Kilmann conflict grid is used to summarise some of the contingencies of cultural intervention.

Culture is a broad concept which includes politics at the level of an organisation or social system and conflict at interpersonal level. Both politics and conflict are cultural phenomena. They derive from deep-seated beliefs about what is right, or possible, or useful. Political change and intergroup conflict management can thus be approached as exercises in cultural change. All three, culture and politics and conflict, are closely related phenomena.

Politics is to do with the relationship between individuals and systems; conflict arises within relationships between individuals. Both can emerge, too, in relationships between groups. Politics, conflict and culture are therefore all concerned with the structure, the patterns of relationships, of social systems.

As we argue later, culture is multi-layered. It ranges from specific behaviours to very general patterns which arise in a variety of situations. What we see of it, however, is the most superficial layer — behaviour and objects. All we can do is observe behaviour and change behaviour, even when we are attempting to reach the deepest levels (technically the "mythological" levels) of cultural existence. Some behaviour arises from a culture's mythology. But mythology is also created or changed by first changing behaviour. The interaction between behaviour and the deeper levels of culture is two-way.

Faced with this complexity, we adopt an eclectic and multi-level approach. We offer a number of models as conceptual tools for understanding culture. The life-cycle model provides us with an entry into thinking about culture. It describes the multiple layers of culture and provides a terminology and a perspective. Our examination of it comprises the first major part of the monograph. The remaining models, operating at very different levels of explanation, round out the description of culture and cultural intervention.

At the broadest perspective the second watershed provides an evolutionary explanation for the current shifts (and therefore the current interest) in culture. It provides a historical context. The culture grid is slightly less global, and identifies two of the dimensions on which culture may vary: the relationships between individual and system, and between individual and individual. More fine-grain again in its focus, the conflict grid of Thomas and Kilmann provides criteria for deciding what style of conflict management is appropriate for resolving conflict between individuals or sub-cultures. Three varieties of process are distinguished: consensual, adversarial, and dialectical.

Finally, and most tentatively, we muse upon the difficulties of intervening in a system's culture. With some trepidation we offer some thoughts on how it might be done.

Since it is concepts of culture which have most influenced our own thoughts on the issues here, we begin by canvassing some of the literature for views on its nature. We also offer some opinions of our own.

The nature of organisational culture

In the human eye there are both day and night receptors. The day receptors allow us to see in most levels of illumination, from moderately low to very high; the night receptors handle very low levels only. In most of the retina, the sensitive inside layer, both forms of receptor are to be found. In the centre of the retina, however, there are only daytime receptors. This allows us excellent detail of vision when we look directly at something during the day.

It has a very different effect at night; for there are no night receptors at the centre of the retina. At night, in very dim light, we see things more clearly when we don't focus on them. When we look directly at them, they disappear.

Studying the culture of social systems, it seems to us, is rather like studying in very dim light. If you look at it indirectly, it is indistinct. There is a strong temptation, an overpowering itch, to focus on it more directly. But if you look at it directly it disappears altogether. Much of it can be studied only with the subconscious. The conscious mind does better with vague and indirect glimpses. The more directly you examine it, the greater the danger that you will decide it does not exist.

It is therefore with some hesitation that we provide a definition of sorts. We do so for convenience, to delimit in some way the phenomena we intend to address. The assertions we offer as definition find some support in the material that follows, and we have also provided more details elsewhere (for example Dalmau, 1983, and Dick and Dalmau, 1989). But the support will probably not be persuasive if you already disagree.

We suggest therefore that you treat our definition as a kind of manifesto: a statement of what we have decided "culture" will mean to us, in this monograph.

Organisations, by which we mean social systems of almost all kinds, depend for their operation on how well they carry out the tasks which allow them to survive. You might say that survival is their prime directive, or their ultimate imperative. They are enabled to carry out their survival tasks by other phenomena, some of which are cultural.

In particular, people attribute meaning to the events and situations they find themselves in. And it is to the meaning that they react, not to the reality itself. Something which is meaningless is ignored.

Somewhat arbitrarily, we have decided that culture is to do with those aspects of organisational life which relate both to meaning and to survival. To survive, organisations must manage their relationship with their environment. They must secure enough resources from it, and meet its demands.

And to do this, they must in turn manage the internal task of coordination. Organisations exist for many reasons; primary amongst them is to coordinate effort and expertise, so that organised people can accomplish the large or complex tasks which are beyond unorganised individuals.

The external relationships of an organisation are most effectively met, we assume, if the organisation has a sufficient sense of identity, and a sufficient sense of purpose. Both of these we regard as cultural, or partly so, and we will have more to say about them. The effectiveness of coordination depends upon the nature of the relationship between person and person, person and system, sub-system and sub-system, sub-system and system. These too we regard as partly cultural.

At its broadest, we think of culture as the coherent system of assumptions and basic values which find meaning in what occurs. These beliefs distinguish a group from others. They also orient its many choices: about what to do, and how to do it.

Somewhat more formally, by organisational culture we mean the patterns of basic and often unstated assumptions which underlie the behaviour of the people within the system. As we have already implied, these are the assumptions which in the past have enabled the system to survive, and have thus survived with it. (We will have something to say later of some of the assumptions we think will prepare a system for survival in the world we face.)

The culture of a system often persists despite a rapid changeover of the system's members. New members acquire a system's basic assumptions, often implicitly, when they enter the organisation. As they learn the system's tasks, they also internalise the "correct" way to perceive, think and feel when carrying out those tasks. That is, they learn the correct meaning to attribute to the situations they face as organisational members.

Our definition is close to that of Edgar Schein (1985, p9). For him, the patterns of basic assumptions are those invented, discovered or developed by a group or organisation as it pursues its own survival. For the most part, survival consists of coping with two main types of problem, those of external adaptation and internal integration.

If the behaviours of the system are the threads of a fabric, then culture is to be found in the patterns those threads form. In following the behaviours of colleagues, a new member traces out old patterns.

Lundberg (1985: p171-172), too, offers a very similar definition. He also distinguishes four separate levels of meaning for an organisation's culture. In what follows we describe these and compare them to our own earlier formulations.

Before we do this, there are some other issues which deserve clarification. The first of these, and a matter of current debate, is about the existence or otherwise of organisations with a single and unitary culture.

The unity of culture

In reviewing much of the literature on organisational culture, we are struck by the wide diversity of views on whether such a thing as a "unitary organisational culture" can exist. Some writers seem to talk as if it can, though few spell out the conditions under which one would find it.

More commonly, however, we find in some of the more recent literature some agreement that there is no such thing. If it does occur, the current view holds, it is extremely rare.

John Van Maanen and Stephen Barley (1985, p37) are one of the few teams of writers who do spell out the conditions under which one might find a uniform and unitary organisational culture ...

> *"Unitary cultures evolve when all members of an organisation face roughly the same problems, when everyone communicates with almost everyone else, and when each member adopts a common set of understandings for enacting proper and consensually approved behaviour."*

Meryl Louis (1985, p79) offers a similar perspective. She points out that organisations are more appropriately thought of as culture-bearing milieus — arenas in which one will find sites where sub-cultures may develop. She gives some conditions under which one would normally find such locations: they are regularly convening settings, they impose structural interdependencies among people performing tasks, they provide opportunities for affiliation, and they constitute constellations of interest or purposes.

These, we think, are appropriate. They are also very restrictive conditions. In fact, they correspond nearly to the preconditions we have on occasion identified for cohesive teams (for example Dick, 1977). We wouldn't claim that effective teams are all that common.

Our reasoning was that, among other things, an effective team can exist only when every member has some sense of identification with every other member. People then feel one another's pain, and are motivated to behave in mutually-satisfying ways. In the present context it may be noted that it is under these conditions that a sense of collective identity is most likely to develop.

So, if these are the conditions which define a unitary culture, it is obvious that they apply in practice to very few organisations. Indeed, Van Maanen and Barley go on to point out that organisations intentionally differentiate their members by assigning them relatively isolated roles and niches in organisations. They point out that when people occupying similar niches face similar problems and they have both opportunities and ways of interacting together then organisational sub-cultures are born. Van Maanen and Barley give a very down-to-earth and illustrative set of descriptions of how organisational sub-cultures emerge in most corporate settings.

Louis (p76-79) argues against assuming that an organisation has one unitary culture. To do so, she believes, is to commit one among four of the most common errors associated with the study of organisational culture.

> *"It is clear that it is both erroneous and costly to assume that (1) an organisation has only one culture and/or (2) whatever culture is detected within an organisation is necessarily a determining force in the culture of that organisation". (p78)*

She also states that many students of organisational culture make other assumptions. One is that the culture of a sub-group equals that of the whole organisation. Another is that one trait, albeit a dominant one, of an organisation defines the essence of its culture.

Rather than come down firmly on one side or the other, we propose a more flexible account. It depends upon a wider consideration of the way in which culture is stored. To this we now turn.

Beliefs, relationships, structure

As we have argued in other places, organisations exist only because people believe that they do. One might argue that organisation charts and buildings and other tangible records exist apart from the people in the organisation. But these comprise the "formal organisation". They are the official fiction, akin to Argyris' and Schön's "espoused theory" which people imagine they hold. The actual organisation is the informal organisation, or (in Argyris' and Schön's terms) analagous to the theory-in-use.

To say it differently, by informal we mean the organisation as it is, not as it purports to be. The formal system is what is shown, for example, on the organisation charts and in the mission statements. The informal system is the one which actually acts.

The informal system can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. Here we deal particularly with three — structure, relationships and beliefs.

By structure we intend to describe such phenomena as who communicates with, or reports to, or influences whom. Ultimately, we assume, organisations exist to coordinate the effort and expertise of individuals. The organisational task is accomplished at the myriad interfaces between individual and individuals. Structure is the "big picture" perspective on these interfaces: the pattern of who communicates with whom.

By relationships we mean the interfaces themselves. The quality of a relationship is decided by the nature of communication between two people, and the distribution of influence.

The beliefs we deal with are primarily those about other people, and about the organisation. In terms of the taxonomy of levels of organisational existence (subject of the next chapter) they are the rules and values which direct behaviour.

Underlying much of what we say is an assumption: that these three — structure, relationships, beliefs — are three perspectives on the same phenomenon. To put it somewhat differently, our starting equation is ...

$$\text{structure} \cong \text{relationship} \cong \text{belief}$$

Structure is a characteristic of systems as a whole. It comprises the patterns of communication and other interaction within the system. And remember that we are referring to the actual structure, not the fiction known as an organisation chart.

Look at any part of the structure through a magnifying glass, and what do you see? You focus on one of the myriad interfaces at which the effort and expertise of individuals is welded into a team and organisational effort. Structure at organisational level consists of role relationships at interpersonal level.

Take a microscope to it and go into the person. It then becomes a set of beliefs about role relationships. People relate to each other depending on their beliefs about their own role, their expectation of the other person's role, and the rules about "right ways" of interacting.

We later refer to these as rules and values; and as we mention, they have emotional components too. They may or may not be conscious. Often the most influential of them are not.

Change enough of the beliefs and their associated feelings, and you change the relationships. Change enough of the relationships, and you change the structure. They have to be real changes, however: changes in the informal system. Decreeing that an organisation has a certain structure does not make it so.

The function of structure

As we have already implied, structure and relationship and belief relate in a fundamental way to the central purpose of social systems. They exist to allow individuals to achieve collective outcomes which are beyond their capacity as individuals. On this view, structure can be regarded as a set of mechanisms for coordinating effort and expertise.

It is from the same equation (structure $\cong$ relationship $\cong$ belief) that we derive our assertion that all three are cultural phenomena.

We have already offered the thought that "culture" consists of those patterns of behaviour and belief which characterise "a culture". Many of those patterns relate to, and sustain, the social structures which characterise that culture.

What we are saying it this ... Culture is characterised amongst other things by the way in which person relates to person, and person to system, and system to system. In other words, structure is at least partly a cultural phenomenon.

At a more specific level culture consists partly of the style of relationship between people filling different roles within the structure. At the level of the individual these phenomena consist mostly of beliefs about what is correct behaviour between people of certain roles, and between people and the "organisation". They include feelings about those beliefs.

We do not presume that the beliefs are always consciously held or expressly stated. On the contrary, we have already argued that many of the most important beliefs reside below awareness. Part of their stability and resistance to alteration derives from this.

But consider a number of individuals within an organisation (you will recall by "organisation" we intend a variety of social systems). Each of these individuals has some set of beliefs about the organisation. Many of these beliefs, never articulated, are held below awareness. Many of them have cultural significance.

It is scarcely imaginable that any two people would have absolutely no overlap in their beliefs. In fact, there are clusters of beliefs, partly cultural, which characterise much of Western society. Many of the features of Western social systems are imported from the wider society in which the systems are located.

It is true that each set of beliefs is to some extent unique. But some overlap is all that is required. To the extent that there are beliefs which are out of awareness,subconscious and shared, we can view them as a "collective unconscious" (Figure 1). We do not intend the mystical overtones Jung accorded to a concept of the same name.

 Society consists of groups of people: families, friendship groups, work teams, sporting team ... For each group there is at least some minimal overlap in unconscious beliefs, and thus a collective unconscious. The more closely the people work or live or play together, and the greater the extent to which they share common goals and a common history, the greater the potential for overlap. It is
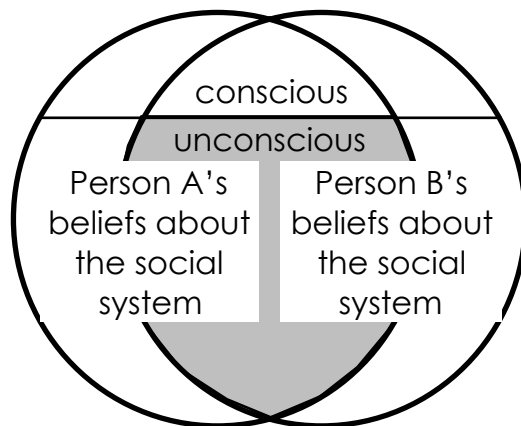
Fig. 1

The collective unconscious as the overlap between the unconscious beliefs held by two or more people about a social system.

in such terms that the conditions for unity proposed by Van Maanen and Barley, and by Louis, can be understood.

We therefore think of organisational culture as sets of overlapping belief (and feeling) systems. Each of these is a collective unconscious for the groups of people sharing the beliefs. The unity or otherwise of culture thus becomes a matter of degree, not an all-or-none matter.

Cultural unity revisited

In the light of the above, we can return to Louis' arguments to draw the following conclusions ...

1. Organisational culture is a subtle and complex phenomenon in the collective life of all groups.

2. A closed-system approach to organisational culture which assumes uniform and unitary cultures is likely more often than not to miss the mark. It is more fruitful to assume that any social system consists of a multitude of overlapping sub-cultures of varying degrees of similarity.

3. When attempting to study or change organisational culture, it helps to be clear about the boundaries within which one is working. There is otherwise a risk that precision will be sacrificed in payment for a generality (the burden of comprehensiveness) of doubtful benefit.

4. However, there is good news too. Although cultural change agents may rightly be pessimistic about rapid change in the culture of a whole organisation, they may be reasonably confident about the prospects for change within subcultures. We later offer this as one of the most promising interventions, and have taken it up in more detail in *From the profane to the sacred: small groups as vehicles for cultural change* (Dalmau and Dick, 1989)

With these cautions in mind, we can now move to one of the aims of this document, to examine politics and conflict as partly cultural phenomena.

Culture, politics and conflict

The more that we study organisational culture, the more we are struck by the overlap between culture, politics and conflict. Organisational politics and the associated conflict, we believe, are almost inevitable by-products of any human endeavour where culture and sub-cultures begin to form.

Moreover, sub-cultural formation seems inevitable in all but the smallest and most cohesive of organisations.

Complete agreement on any issue of value within an organisation is a relatively rare occurrence. As Martin, Sitkin and Boehm (p101-102) state, dissensus and differentiation are the norm of organisational life rather than the undesired exception.

Hence, organisations are more properly seen as umbrellas for (or sometimes even somewhat arbitrary boundary lines around) collections of sub-cultures.

We have suggested that the prime function of organisation as organisation is coordination. For reasons we will canvass later (see the later section on the second watershed) the almost universal strategy for structuring organisations it to subdivide on the basis of function, and then coordinate by controlling from the top.

Organisations typically differentiate into various functional groupings, each of which develops a local functional perspective. Over time these perspectives develop differentiated local values and sets of basic underlying unconscious assumptions. Organisations can thus be thought of as arenas for political action.

Put another way, structural inconsistencies and value clashes between the groups within an organisation are properly viewed as facts of life. These facts are "suspiciously tinged by telltale hues of cultural processes" (Van Maanen and Barley, p48) in almost every case.

Conflict and ambiguity inevitably attend any sense-making (that is, meaning-making) process. Members of organisations need to make "sense" of their world in order to function together effectively as a group.

Part of the ubiquity of conflict can be explained by the existence of largely-unconscious basic assumptions which people hold. A person or group tends to regard certain behaviours as "right" for all people or groups. When others do not conform to this expectation, group members typically do not revise their expectations. They are more likely to assume that "They know very well what they are supposed to do", and invent some motive to explain the discrepancy (Figure 2).

Because the beliefs lie below awareness they are often incapable of being addressed in rational ways.subconscious Elliot Aronson (1976, p299-300; and compare the later quote from Dandridge) had something to say about this.
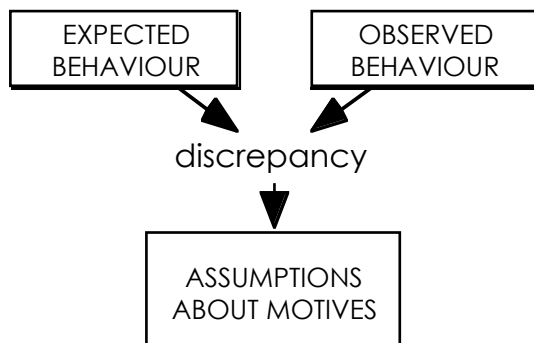
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┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
│   EXPECTED   │   │   OBSERVED   │      Fig. 2
│  BEHAVIOUR   │   │  BEHAVIOUR   │
└──────────────┘   └──────────────┘      When the behaviour we observe
         ↘           ↙                   is different to what we expect, we
                                         explain the discrepancy by attributing
         discrepancy                     motives
              │
              ↓
     ┌──────────────┐
     │  ASSUMPTIONS │
     │ ABOUT MOTIVES│
     └──────────────┘
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> *"As long as I know why I believe x, I am relatively free to change my mind; but if all
> I know is that x is true — and that's all there is to it — I am far more likely to cling
> to that belief, even in the face of disconfirming evidence."*

In his view, it is beliefs which are held without reason that are most resistant to evidence. As we have already said, many of these beliefs are about structure.

At the broadest level, the Western World shares a collective unconscious. One of the beliefs that resides within this collective unconscious holds that benefits will be reaped from the rationalisation of work. "Rationalisation" eventually justifies a host of familiar organising strategies: functionalisation, specialisation, automation, professionalisation, standardisation, specification, and various "other -ations". These are common beliefs among most of the people who are responsible for designing and maintaining organisations.

By and large these strategies seek the benefits of efficiency and productivity by segmenting a workforce. In so doing, each strategy inherently promotes sub-cultural differentiation.

We are not saying that this is necessarily a bad thing. By and large, most organisational sub-cultures develop collective understandings that accept the total group's position. Overt and damaging conflict with the presumed corporate position is thus less than might otherwise arise. In any event, the segmentation probably came about in the first instance because it worked.

Sub-cultures do necessarily imply an internal political economy as a necessary outcome. But sub-cultural disputes are usually played out over particular issues. Rarely is a single sub-culture overwhelmingly at odds with the remainder of the organisation. When it is, it probably soon secedes. Or the organisation reacts by excising it. More often, we suspect, the differences are kept covert rather than risk the consequences of bringing them into the open.

The facts of organisational life nevertheless include the structures and strategies we mentioned earlier. They are just as likely, if not more likely, to act as centrifugal forces that encourage the disintegration of a unitary culture, or at least limit its formation.

In other words, to study or change organisational culture is to deal with conflict and political systems. To enquire about cultural organisation is to enquire about the processes that transform organisations into veiled political economies and conflict-laden milieus (Van Maanen and Barley, p48).

Sub-cultures within an organisation plant the seeds of potential conflict. These usually remain dormant until activated by a specific course of events. At such times, conflict is usually played out around current issues and role definitions.

Once these latent tensions between groups are activated, the character and outcome of the ensuing conflict depends upon a host of variables. The political influence that any group can muster is one such variable. Other are the opportunities to exercise political power, and the conditions that shape each group's existence in relation to other sub-groups within the organisation. A lot depends on the conflict management skills and styles of those people who exercise formal authority or leadership within the total system.

The diversity of sub-cultural elements within a total system is also an important variable. As we have said, politics and conflict attend any organisation. In attempting to manage the conflict, organisational members often encounter

difficulties, surprises, and challenges. By and large, the greater the variation in cultural beliefs, and the less consciously these are held, the greater the difficulty.

Diverse sub-cultures generate a wider range of self-interests. The greater the diversity, the more likely that any given change will challenge someone's self-interest or violate someone's beliefs. In other words, in diverse cultures there are more opportunities for change to trigger resistance. Further, the existence of many or diverse sub-cultures hinders communication, based as it is on shared meanings.

As if this were not enough, the shared meanings are deeply held, and at the same time mostly subconscious. Cultural beliefs are very often beliefs without reason. We agree with Krefting and Frost (1985, p157) that the opportunities for dealing with such differences in the short term are almost negligible.

There are in fact aspects of organisational life which encourage sub-cultures to form. Groups develop within organisations on the basis of many different factors; but essentially the main underlying variable is segmentation of one form or another.

We have said that culture consists of shared meanings which group members attribute to events and situations. The shared meanings are developed through experience, and shaped by it. Shared experience, then, is the most powerful source in the creation of a shared culture. Acquire a history, and you acquire a culture too. When groups (i.e. sub-cultures) get into conflict with each other, that conflict is very difficult to reduce.

Groups have a strong need to maintain their identity. It is their psychological survival, almost as high a priority as their physical survival. One of the best ways groups know for asserting their distinctive identity is to compare and contrast themselves with other groups. In other words, intergroup comparison, competition, or conflict may help to maintain and build intra-group cultures

(Schein, p39). You may have noticed, in activities using subgroups, that as sub-group cohesion develops, often so does intergroup competition.

Where then does this leave us? Organisational culture is complex. It exists not as a unitary "thing" within an organisation but more as a collection of sub-cultures which drive the life of various groups within the system. These groups over time develop their own identity. In order to preserve this identity, they vie for power and status. They fight to establish their own preferred ways of dealing with the world. They try to bring about the dominance of various beliefs and values in order to maintain their own identity. This situation inevitably results in conflict between sub-groups within an organisation; the total pattern of such conflict can be seen as a political system.

Any cultural intervention is likely at some point to impinge upon organisational structure, and relationships, and beliefs. The relationships are characterised by power differentials, and often competition for resources and rewards. To engage with an organisation's culture is inevitably to engage in politics and conflict management. We later provide some concepts which help in doing this.

At the very least, cultural interventions disturb patterns of influence and power. In other words, they are political interventions by definition. As such they arouse a strong and often unreasoned defence of the status quo by those who have most to lose. And since power is invisible downwards, those who exercise it are often blind to just how much of it they have. The defence can thus be offered by people secure in the knowledge that God, or at least "right", is on the side of the powerful.

■ Levels of culture

We have so far had something to say about the nature of culture, and the lack of a unitary culture in most organisations. We have also provided an overview of the links between culture and politics and conflict. We have still to distinguish between cultural and non-cultural behaviour, and between superficial and deeper levels. In doing this, we develop a terminology which we can use to talk about these issues when we come to consider approaches to cultural diagnosis and change.

The catalyst for our thinking in this chapter was Lundberg (1985). To set the scene for this examination, we draw first upon the work of Argyris and Schön (1974, 1978).

Four levels: from the specific to the general

If you were not well informed about Western culture, and were trying to describe Western behaviour, how would you go about it? Suppose you know absolutely nothing: perhaps you are a Venusian anthropologist newly arrived on earth to study the natives. Knowing only what you can observe for yourself, how can you compile records to inform your Venusian colleagues about human behaviour?

Actions

Scrupulously accurate observations would seem to be a good start. You could watch closely, and note down in detail the actions of the people you observed. If you observed enough people in enough situations you could build up a representative description of human behaviour.

(In fact, you couldn't. Perception is selective; and the selections we make are partly decided by our language and by our theories about what is going on. But for simplicity ignore that.)

On its own, detailed description of actions wouldn't be enough. People behave too differently in different situations for many descriptions to be generally true. I would guess, for instance, that people of your acquaintance don't behave entirely the same on a crowded railway station as they do in the privacy of their own home. For accuracy, a Venusian anthropologist would have to accompany each description of behaviour with a description of the situation.

Nor would that be sufficient. People may behave differently depending on their intentions. Imagine someone at the crowded railway station waiting to catch a regular train. And now imagine the same person at the same railway station, running a little late for a meeting at the station with someone not known by sight.

As a Venusian anthropologist you would presumably decide to include some information about intentions. At the very least the records might usefully include a description of the situation, a description of a person's intentions, and a behavioural description ...

> "In situation **a**, a person [described in some detail] did **b**. intending to accomplish **c**."

This would apply for each observation made. And you might well decide that further information would be useful, too — age, sex, and occupation of the

person, for example: in short, the role the person is occupying. Of course, being a Venusian, you might know nothing about roles; you might have to deduce them from the evidence.

Not that the information you have compiled is very useful. Assuming that Venusians have some limits to their information processing capacities, the sheer mass of data would be overwhelming. Some way has to be found to condense the data into something which identifies the most important patterns.

Rules

In fact, people do so many different things that you would find it hard to describe in detail more than a sample of what you observed. What you would most probably do is report those behaviours which you observed most often. You would probably attempt a summary of them.

In other words, you would look for patterns in your observations, and report the patterns. In doing so you might lose some of the detail, but make your data more easily usable.

So, behaviour is situational, and depends on intentions. The patterns of behaviour, too, usually differ from situation to situation, and depend on intentions. People in general behave differently on a crowded railway station and in their own home; people in general behave differently when they are waiting to catch a train and when they are running late to meet an unknown traveller.

Our Venusian might therefore report the patterns of behaviour by adopting a formula similar to that for the raw observations ...

> "In situation **a**, people are likely to do **b**, when it is their intention to accomplish **c**."

You can regard such statements as rules. People seem to behave as if there are unwritten rules to follow: "On a railway station, waiting for a train, stand facing the tracks and read a newspaper or book or talk to the person next to you."

Although the rules are not 100 per cent accurate, many of them predict behaviour quite well. Most commuters do behave in a roughly similar fashion. If the behaviour and situation and intention are frequent enough, you may be able to make rough predictions from them.

These rules, then, are to some extent specific to the situation but common enough to be often observed. Chris Argyris and his colleagues (for example 1978, 1982) call them action strategies. In the following paragraphs we intend to relate other levels of description to Argyris' ideas. We will later show that they bear some similarity, for behaviour in general, to what Lundberg has proposed for cultural behaviour.

In short, action strategies are implicit rules about action. You might deduce them from observing a wide enough range of human behaviour. They are the general ways in which people manage their environment, including their social environment.

Still in your role of Venusian, you now find that the data base is substantially more useful. But it still contains enormous amounts of information. Asked to address a congress of Venusian anthropologists, you are unlikely to have enough time to report more than a few of these generalisations or actions.

Even though your description of patterns of behaviour is now much briefer, it can be further summarised. On examination you might find that there are similarities between one action strategy and others. There are patterns in the patterns. In identifying and describing these higher-order patterns you are now working with yet more general rules of behaviour which act across classes of situations or intentions. Argyris calls them governing variables or occasionally

governing values. Of the two terms we prefer the second as more nearly self-explanatory. In this monograph we sometimes use the shorter term values.

Values

Governing values, then, are the more general behavioural intentions which people display across a range of situations. For example, there are behaviours which are common in public settings, and rare in private settings. There are actions which are common for unmarried people pursuing a sexual partner, which married people less commonly exhibit. And there are some which are more general than that — in most settings, most people value some level of tact.

As an example of governing values, Argyris identifies these (among others) ...

- Achieve the purposes as the actor perceives them
- Maximise winning and minimise losing
- Minimise eliciting negative feelings
- Be rational and minimise emotionality
- Valid information
- Free and informed choice
- Internal commitment to the choice and constant monitoring of the implementation

In your address to the Annual Congress of Extravenusian Studies, you can report human behaviour in similar terms.

Not that these are the only values which govern behaviour. They just happen to be some of those which together define one or the other of two clusters of values which emerge in Argyris' work. For, on further analysis you would then find that values tend to cluster together. For example, the first four above together define a style of interpersonal behaviour and social structure which form a

distinct paradigm. Argyris calls it Model I. The other three define an alternative paradigm which Argyris labels Model II.

Values are combinations of beliefs and feelings. They specify desired classes of behaviour. The beliefs, conscious or unconscious, specify which behaviour is appropriate and which is inappropriate. The feeling component of a value is what provides the motivation to act. (Those friends of yours who believe in physical fitness but do little about it demonstrate how beliefs without feelings have little actual effect.)

Many of the values are held as irrational beliefs, in the sense that people do not know why they hold them. This can make them difficult to change.

Paradigms

We mention above that values cluster to form paradigms. A paradigm is a pervasive orientation to the world and to people: a world-view, you might say.

Figure 3 summarises the relationship between actions, rules, values, and paradigms.
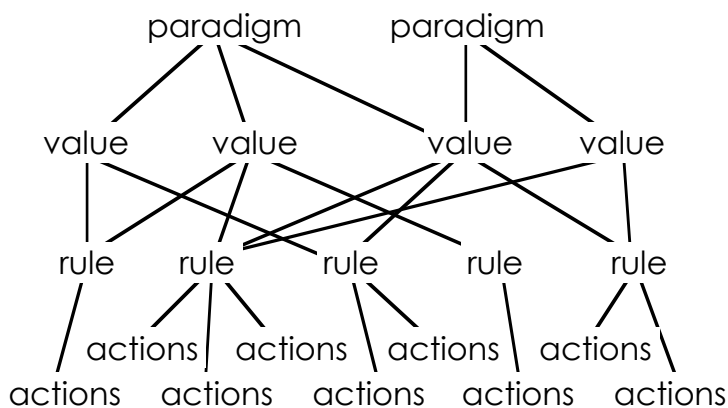

Fig. 3

A hierarchy of rules can be constructed by abstracting the patterns from observed behaviour

The relationship between actual behaviour and Models I and II can be regarded as a hierarchy. From actions, rules are deduced; some of these rules show similarities which Argyris has named governing values (which we will often abbreviate to values); these in turn cluster into the paradigms which Argyris calls Models I and II.

We are not saying that these rules are always consciously known. Some are. But in other instances what we preach (our espoused theory, Argyris would say) differs from the rules which an objective observer would deduce from our actions. Some of the rules are unconscious. Not only that, but some of the rules are not accessible to consciousness, because they conflict with the espoused rules.

In partial summary, it can be said that in their actions people seem to observe rules which are hierarchically arranged. Some of these rules are not readily accessible to awareness. Overall, they comprise four levels, which we have labelled actions, rules, values and paradigms.

It will be found that some of the actions, and some of the rules at each level, have cultural significance.

Culture and non-culture

In the earlier edition of this monograph, we retained the original three levels of cultural phenomena of the life-cycle model. We assumed that they included both cultural and non-cultural phenomena, and overlapped the four levels of culture. Figure 4 captures our thinking at the time. We also observed that the stages of decline we had earlier described (Dalmau, 1983) fitted better with Lundberg's ideas than did the stages of growth.

Our attention was attracted to Lundberg's work by these apparent inconsistencies between his work and ours. The reconciliation of the inconsistencies came
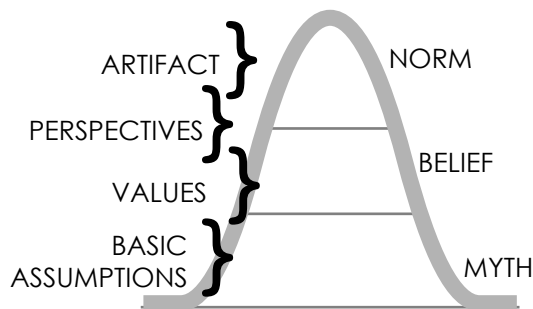
Fig. 4

A comparison of our earlier categories (on the right) with those of Lundberg. Our categories were assumed to include more than culture

when we realised that actions express both cultural and non-cultural phenomena. The non-cultural phenomena are those which occur for reasons other than expressing the culture of a system. They may, for example, arise from ...

■ expressions of external cultures; brought into the organisation, for instance by members of professional groups, they may co-exist with the organisation's culture;

■ higher order values or perspectives (including those that arose by chance, or those that once were required for a task which no longer exists), and which bear no immediate relation to the group's unconscious assumptions; or

■ responses to external pressures, perhaps imposed on the organisations by other agencies.

In short, there are task demands which may or may not be cultural. Some of the actions we carry out would have to be done within any cultural setting. There are other things which occur by chance, and have no significance culturally.

And there are actions which express the important unconscious assumptions people make about their collective existence, and which are cultural. Some of the cultural actions may consist of cultural embellishments upon non-cultural behaviour: we eat to survive; but the way we eat expresses our assumptions about ourselves.

As we suggested in our 1989 document *To tame a unicorn*, it is useful to regard an organisation or other social system as a sphere, with layers and layers of existence. You can think of it as being like an onion. All you can see or experience directly is the outer layer of behaviour and things and events. If you could peel away the outer layers, however, you would uncover deeper and deeper layers of existence. None of the deeper layers can be accessed directly.

This notion can be combined with the ideas we drew from comparing our ideas with those of Lundberg. The whole onion consists of the organisation or social system in its entirely. One cone of this sphere, stretching from periphery to core, is cultural. Figure 5, also based on a diagram from *Unicorn*, is a graphic representation.

We also suggested in *To tame a unicorn* a different categorisation. To achieve this, we distinguished as we do here between phenomena in general, and those that are cultural. We also distinguished between given instances of behaviour or things or events, and the classes from which they were drawn. There are thus now eight terms we use.
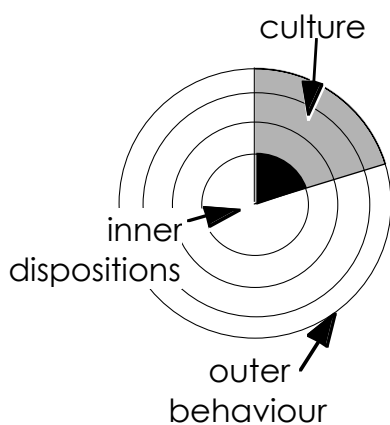

Fig. 5

Culture can be regarded as part of a system, existing (like other aspects of organisation) at several levels

Terminology

We originally hoped we could continue to use our previous terms. Eventually, however, we decided that this might be confusing, as they did not distinguish cultural and non-cultural phenomena. The levels which include both cultural and non-cultural events will be found to be similar to those of Argyris. The cultural terms are now equivalent in general to those of Lundberg.

The revised terms, as modified since, are as follows ...

Actions   (or events or objects) occur on the outer layer of the organisation. They are particular instances, and may be cultural or not. For example, if someone walks in the front door of the main building of an organisation, that is an action. It may or may not have cultural significance (if only some members of the organisation use the front door, it probably does).

Rituals   are actions which have cultural significance. For objects we can use Lundberg's term artifacts. A ritual or artifact is one instance of a recurring cultural event or object, expressive of culture, and with a specified form. Most social systems, for example, have specific modes of greeting, and many of these signal important features of the system culture. A specific instance when one person greets another is thus a ritual, as we use the term.

Rules   are prescriptions or formulas describing the form an event or object should take. In many organisations, for example, procedure manuals state how a task is to be done. On any one occasion, performing the task constitutes an action or event. The description in the procedure manual is a rule.

               A rule is often explicit, as with a procedure manual, but it need not be. There are many unwritten rules which specify how people "should" behave. Much of our social behaviour is governed by such rules.

Procedure manuals are not always followed slavishly; there may be implicit rules about which procedures you have to follow closely, and which ones allow you some poetic licence. Sometimes the written and unwritten rules differ substantially (for example in Western cultures the rules about telling lies).

The distinction between action and rule is useful. If a task is not done successfully, it may be because the person did not follow the procedure manual; or it may be because the procedure manual does not describe a successful way of performing the task. These constitute different problems.

Mores   (pronounced more-rays; the singular, strictly speaking, is mos). Mores are rules with cultural significance. Just as an action or event is a single expression of a rule, so a rituals in our usage are single expressions of mores.

There are many unwritten rules about how people should relate to one another depending on their particular role and the particular occasion. For example, there are many things which parents can say to children, but children do not say to parents. Many of these exemplify the type of authority relationship which characterises our culture. In other words they are cultural rules, and thus mores in our terminology.

Values   comprise beliefs or sets of beliefs which underlie or justify a rule or collection of rules.

When beliefs and rules are explicit the distinction between them is apparent. To provide an instance, many organisations now hold a value about equity. It may be expressed in very general terms: perhaps something like "No action of any officer of this organisation shall disadvantage any person on grounds of sex, age, ethnic origin or religion". A variety of rules then apply the value to different organisational arenas: personnel areas like recruitment, selection and promotion; customer service; choice of suppliers; and so on.

As in the earlier discussion, values consists of the higher-order patterns which you might deduce from the formulas and events. Values find their expression in such things as goal and mission statements, and the ideological rationale which people often use to support their actions.

Ethos   (or ideology) is a philosophy which underlies cultural mores and rituals. To the extent that mission statements address cultural issues, they may be an expression (probably partial) of an organisational ethos. Equity is a value with cultural significance, and thus partly a component of ethos.

Paradigm   consists of the most global characteristics of an organisation. It operates unconsciously to provide the foundations for the other levels of organisational being.

We agree with Argyris that there are two major prevailing paradigms, to some extent in conflict with each other. One is the paradigm of control and competition and adversarial relationships. This corresponds roughly with Argyris' Model I. The other, similar to Argyris' Model II, is the paradigm of empowerment and collaboration and mutual concern.

Myth   is the cultural counterpart of paradigm. It consists of the most basic assumptions about the nature of people and their world. As with the paradigm (of which it is part) it lies outside awareness.

A caution: we are here using myth as a technical term. We do not intend it to have any connotations about truth or otherwise.

By the way, it may be that all paradigm is also myth — that all of our unconscious and basic assumptions about our organisations and social systems are cultural. We are undecided about this, and undecided how we might determine the reality. Residing out of awareness as it does, it is not easily amenable to study.

The relationship of the eight labels, and their place in the layers of organisational existence, are shown in Figure 6.

System | Culture

actions   rituals

rules   mores
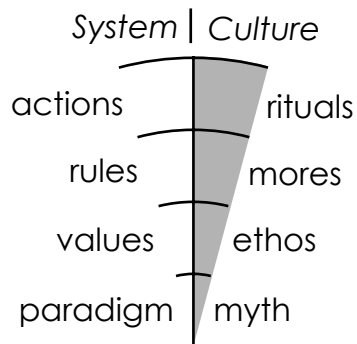
values   ethos

paradigm | myth

Fig. 6

System phenomena generally, and system culture specifically, exist at many levels. The labels we will use for these levels are shown generally (on the left) and for culture (on the right)

It is evident from our description so far that culture is part of every layer, but only part of each (except perhaps the deepest). As with many other system phenomena its real essence is to be found at the core (as Figure 5 previously illustrated) which you cannot directly access.

Accessing the deeper levels

If you wish to engage in any way with the system's culture, you have no choice about the level at which you do so. It can only be at the outer layer of events and rituals. Whatever your purpose, perhaps diagnosis or intervention, that is all you can do. And this is so even though you may well be interested in the deepest layers. Diagnosis or change is directed at the deeper layers, but must work from the outside.

We can illustrate this using an example from Unicorn. Consider the difficulty of talking about culture. Words as words are surface phenomena. It is words, or other behaviours, that have to communicate information about culture. Culture, as we said in *Unicorn*, is ...

> "not so much the words but their meaning. It is not organisational
> behaviour as such which lies close to the core, but rather the meaning of

that behaviour. People attribute meaning to words and other behaviour, and in doing so they infer culture."

We spoke elsewhere in *Unicorn* about "the patterns within the patterns within the patterns" from which cultural meanings are inferred. For reasons we won't go into here (they are addressed to some extent in Jung for sceptics) the conscious mind does not easily handle the complexity and ambiguity of these deeper patterns. Diagnosis or intervention which intends to reach the deeper levels therefore addresses the unconscious in ways which may not be accessible entirely to conscious understanding.

It is hardly surprising, then, that a given behaviour may imply both cultural and non-cultural depths. Interpreting the deeper levels is complicated by this variability in the meaning (or underlying source) of actions or events or objects.

Dimensions of system life

The variability in the source of surface phenomena is perhaps best illustrated by Pennings and Gresov. They explore the various interrelationships among the six sub-systems of technology, structure and culture both internal and external to an organisation (p324). Any one of these, or several in interaction, may determine or partly determine actions or events or objects.

Bert Cunnington and David Limerick from Griffith University (1986, 1987) have made similar comments in their paper on what they call "the fourth blueprint". They had earlier reported (Limerick, Cunnington, and Trevor-Roberts, 1984) on a replication of the Peters and Waterman study of organisational excellence. An analysis of the trends predicted by chief executives showed that there was a belief that the organisational world was changing. In our terminology (and that of the Griffith University team) they think we are at the threshold of a different paradigm.

One of the changes is of present relevance. It comprises a belief that it is no longer possible to manage strategy, structure and culture as if they are different phenomena. You might say that they are now all part of the same package.

To illustrate this, we will use the model which forms part of the basis for the intervention taxonomy we have described previously (Dalmau, Dick and Boas, 1989). One dimension of the taxonomy consists of the levels of culture we have already defined. The other two levels, which interact with it, we describe as scope of intervention and level of intervention. Figure 7, modified from Dick (1977), summarises the three dimensions.

The figure shows only the leading interactions. We could as easily have inserted two-way arrows between every term and every other term, and between every term and culture. As presented, however, we intend the diagram to state that individual behaviour (the terms in the left-most column) can be for reasons of the job to be done (the task), the interdependencies to be managed (the role), or reasons (cultural or not) beyond this. The influence is mainly, though not exclusively, from the wider society and the wider organisation.
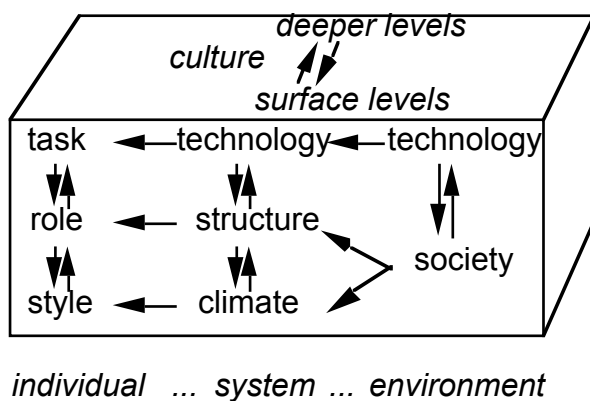

Fig. 7

Dimensions of a taxonomic model of interventions

With such multiple determinants of behaviour, it is optimistic to think that culture could be clearly interpreted from behaviour. This would be true, we think, even if culture were a less complex and more conscious phenomenon than it is.

Pennings and Gresov go on to question whether congruence between technology, structure and culture is easily obtained, or even desirable.

Relationships between concepts

They suggest that congruence is a variable of interest. But they believe it will vary depending upon situational context. Congruence between any two dimensions, they believe, may involve trade-offs, particularly when the sub-systems are internal to the organisation. They suggest that the "marginal utility of congruence" (p325-326) might sometimes be open to question.

When we first encountered their views, we were led to examine our own assumptions.

The original life-cycle model (Sherwood et al, 1977), and our descriptions of it (for example Dalmau, 1983) viewed congruence simply. We took it for granted that it was highly desirable that the different levels of culture were congruent. Our descriptions of the growth and decline of culture presumed that many system problems are poorly dealt with. And we stated or implied that this was precisely because remedy or improvement focussed on the surface levels but neglected the deeper levels.

There are, we now suspect, two issues bound up in this. The first is that confusion between levels occurs readily enough. The second is to do with the desirability or otherwise of congruence.

To take up the first of these ... Some of the confusion between levels may well arise from a more fundamental confusion: between deep-seated phenomena and the behaviour and other tangibles through which they are expressed.

Confusion between levels

Whether we observe a person or a group or an organisation, we see tangible materials and tangible behaviour. All else is deduced from this level. In observing these tangibles it is as well that we bear in mind their multiple potential sources. Not all of the tangibles necessarily express culture.

In fact, it is presumably possible to change the deeper levels over time by first changing the surface levels. In our Network '85 paper we talked as if practices and procedures which constitute the surface level emerge from and express the levels of belief and myth. This is often so. But it is probably as true that current beliefs and myths to some extent grow out of the practices and procedures.

In other words, we have talked as if the causal arrow ran from underlying assumptions to behaviour. We should have realised from decades of social psychological research that the arrow frequently runs in the other direction. It is easier to change attitudes by first changing behaviour, than it is to change behaviour by first changing attitudes. As Peter Wilenski points out, the agent of change must therefore look for ways to change behaviour. "This may be achieved by changing attitudes but this course is slow, painful and uncertain" (p 179).

Argyris' ideas are relevant here too. When we try to change attitudes directly, we most easily engage with those attitudes people think they hold. Their espoused theory, Argyris would call it. But their behaviour is determined more by their theory-in-use, which they do not consciously access. Figure 8, substantially modified from Dick and Dalmau (1990), says this diagrammatically.

espoused values ➤ intentions
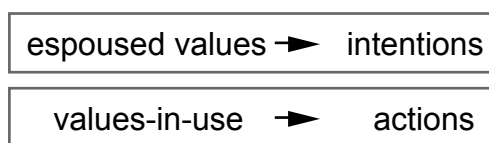
values-in-use ➤ actions

Fig. 8

The links between (governing) values, intentions and actions

Our conscious and unconscious value systems are often kept well compartmentalised. It is as well to keep this in mind.

Some of the differences between culture and behaviour may arise because behaviour is determined by more than just culture. Other sources, mentioned earlier, may contaminate the behaviour through which the culture expresses itself.

On the desirability of congruence, therefore, we might well take the traditional position of "it depends".

Congruence

On the one hand, there are some clear reasons to favour congruence. In the extreme, one can hardly imagine a situation where there is no congruence. We do not believe it is meaningful to talk about culture in the absence of any behavioural expression of it. Culture is reinforced each time it is expressed, for we assume that people deduce the culture unconsciously from observed behaviour.

Any reformulation, too, will do well to take into account the literature on "excellent organisations" in the terminology of Tom Peters (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Peters and Austin, 1985) and others. Our own experience supports some of their assertions. Such organisations do have a shared vision, and do act out that vision in their behaviour. All else being equal, we think there are some advantages in having congruence between different cultural levels.

Peter Vaill (1984), for example, has made a study of high-performing systems. After listing seven different characteristics of such organisations, many implying congruence, he says (p88) ...

> "Above all, HPSs [high performing systems] are systems which have 'jelled', even though the phenomenon is very difficult to talk about. Neither mechanical nor organic metaphors are usually adequate for describing the 'fit' of the various elements and practices of the system."

Elsewhere in the same paper, Vaill's emphasis on a strong sense of purpose suggests that this may be the mechanism by which congruence is achieved. We have heard David Limerick say much the same.

In any event, if incongruence were no problem, it would hardly be useful to try to change cultures. All you have to do is change the behaviour. Clearly, much of the literature presumes that changes of behaviour without a corresponding change in the culture is difficult.

Think of it this way. Behaviour arises from a number of sources, including culture (Figure 9). In the absence of other influences, we presume culture would express itself more or less faithfully. When other influences overcome the effects of culture, then we expect that people are going to feel at least uncomfortable at the violation of their mores.
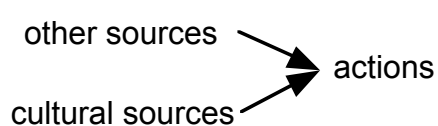

Fig. 9

Actions express both cultural and other sources

You might say, in fact, that an incongruence between culture and behaviour implies an incongruence between culture and the other determinants. If they were the same, they would reinforce the effects of each other on behaviour.

Let us be more specific. Suppose that changed circumstances require a new approach to performing organisational tasks. For example, the banks (among many other organisations) now realise that centralised decision-making slows down their response to clients. When times and attitudes change as rapidly as they do at the moment, a centralised bank will be unable to perform as well as more responsive competitors. If the culture is out of kilter with the demands of the situation, the culture will fight against the behaviour, slowing down the desired change.

It is for reasons such as these that a growing literature urges organisations to adopt more of a service orientation. Karl Albrecht (1988) provides a recent example.

There is, however, another side to this. In times of rapid change, a congruence between levels may mean that neither culture nor its behavioural expression are appropriate. They may well serve the purpose of maintaining the system in its present form. And they may well satisfy the deeper instincts of the members of the system. But they may not earn a profit or (in the public sector) please the minister. The result in both instances will be organisational death. And when the organisation dies, so does its culture with it.

Incongruence, it seems, does indicate that all is not well. But under some circumstances congruence may be even worse. Incongruence may indicate that the organisation has recognised a problem, and is moving to deal with it. As behaviour is more amenable to change in the short term, an organisation in transition may well display behaviour that is sometimes more appropriate than its culture is.

In fact, to produce cultural change, one introduces changes in behaviour. The presumption is that the changed behaviour will in time induce a change in the underlying culture. Almost all of our suggestions about cultural interventions, here and elsewhere, are consistent with this. Incongruence is something a change agent may cultivate to create the leverage for cultural change.

The immediately-foregoing discussion leads us then to three conclusions.

■   The surface phenomena in an organisation do include the expressions of basic assumptions which Lundberg calls artifacts. But they also express other phenomena which may bear no relation to an organisation's underlying myth.

■   All else being equal, congruence between surface and deeper levels of culture is a sign of health. This is only true, however, if the culture is also

congruent with the imperatives of organisational survival. When this condition does not hold, congruence between culture and behaviour may be a sign that the organisation is moribund.

■ The greater the need for change, the more optimistically one can look upon incongruence. It may be a sign of less-than-perfect health, but at least the patient has begun to seek treatment.

Systems in decline

The previous discussion began with a comparison of the three levels of the life-cycle model and Lundberg's four components of culture. As we mentioned earlier, we noted that Lundberg's ideas seemed to fit well with the organisational decline levels of doubt which manifest themselves at different stages of decline: suspended, operational, ideological, ethical and absolute doubt (Dalmau and Dick, 1986a).

We equate the latter four levels with those of Lundberg. By adding a level, have we jeopardised the agreement?

In the event, this caused us less trouble than we had imagined, though we had to recast them somewhat. The stages of decline are now as follows ...

Suspended doubt   Though there may be occasional problems arising out of behaviour which does not accord with the culture, they are not noticed. The organisation believes that all is as well as it might be.

Operational doubt Problems are now acknowledged. They are perceived, however, as being entirely people problems. "The system is fine; if only the people would do as they are supposed to, all would be well."

In many organisations of our experience, management seldom progresses beyond this level of doubt. As the

quality management literature attests (for example Scholtes, 1988), there is a tendency to treat most problems as people problems long after they have become system problems.

Procedural doubt   Problems are now, for the first time, acknowledged to be system problems. The assumption, however, is that they are superficial. "If only we rewrite the procedure manuals and tighten up the selection procedures, the problems will go away."

The presumption is that the problems are still minor. The overall purpose of the organisation, and the tasks it pursues, are believed to be appropriate. The detailed methods are due for revision.

Ethical doubt   The goals and purposes of the organisation now begin to be questioned. The organisation is satisfactory at its core; it needs to review its goals. "We are a good organisation; the goals we are pursuing are no longer appropriate. It's time we rewrote the mission statement."

Absolute doubt   The very existence of the organisation is now questioned. There is a dissolution of meaning and plausibility. The need for dramatic and far-reaching changes is acknowledged: the fundamental nature of the organisation is in doubt.

You might say that it retains its physical existence, but little else.

Dissolution   Having already surrendered its spiritual existence, it sacrifices its physical existence too.

Or, if it does manage to cling to a precarious existence, its members are accidental passengers waiting for something better to come along, or somewhere better to go to.

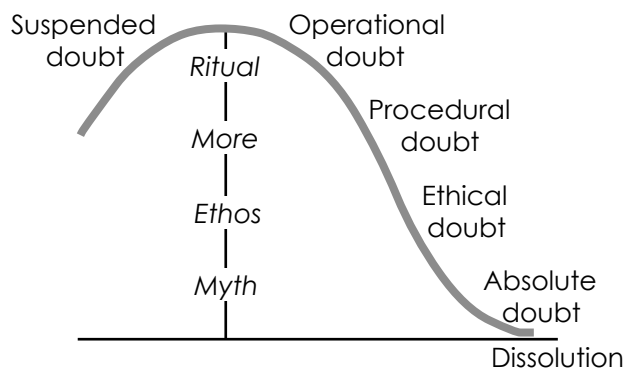Figure 10 provides a summary in diagrammatic form.

Fig. 10

The stages of decline in the life cycle model (new version)

Change and the visibility of culture

There are reasons for believing that the underlying dynamics of culture become more visible in times of change. Stability means that yesterday's behaviours still work well; one-right-answer approaches can flourish. Is there only one way of doing something that is culturally approved? And are there no task requirements which lead to that way being questioned? Then that one way becomes nearly universal. As the options sink out of awareness, so do the cultural underpinnings. In the absence of any need for conscious attention, behaviour can be performed automatically.

It is only when options exist that conscious choice is needed. When new problems or opportunities reward new behaviours, the underpinnings once more become noticeable.

In other words, a system at the stage of suspended doubt or operational doubt does not allow doubt of the system. Either nothing is wrong, or the people are wrong. The system is fine. But this requires stability. Change leads eventually to the system being challenged.

In times of change, aspects which have previously dropped out of awareness may well be lifted once more into consciousness. This is one of the functions that an "unfreezing" stage may serve in a change program.

If you think of culture like an iceberg, with its conscious expression the proportion which is visible, then change has the effect of lifting more of the iceberg into visibility.

A ready example exists in the form of the implicit rules of communication. There were times when roles were clearly defined and people's place in society relatively unchangeable. The style of communication was then also clearly defined. In a given situation, in a given role, there was often no choice but to talk to a given person in a specific way. With more changeable roles, and a more mobile society, new rules are being devised; one set of them is known as "assertion".

But before you can devise new rules, you have to recognise that there are rules. Unconscious rules are often not recognised.

It was a common enough aim of the early unstructured sensitivity training movement to bring the unaware processes of interaction back into awareness by producing change (Bennis, 1964). And someone (Kurt Lewin?) once said something to the effect that you often don't notice the dynamics of a system until you try to change it. Whoever said it, we agree.

Decline of a symbol

To clarify further the stages of decline, we can compare them to those proposed by Thomas Dandridge (1985). Although he is describing the life stages of a symbol, the comparison is instructive. He distinguishes four separate phases ...

Stage 1   People have a complete, unquestioning and unself-conscious belief which may be thought of as primitive.

At this stage there is only one possible conclusion people can draw about a given symbol. No evidence is allowed which refutes the belief; people are not even aware of any conflicting beliefs. All data provided are facts, and unquestioned.

This stage seems to be equivalent to suspended doubt (where nothing is seen to be wrong) or operational doubt (where any misgivings are about the people, not the system). It probably indicates a state in which all the ritual elements are taken for granted, and provide expression to a coherent culture.

Stage 2   At this stage the person allows for the possibility of having some other belief. She may see others who appear to be successful in a comparable endeavour, or happy in their lives, and who are acknowledged to hold other beliefs. Yet she depends heavily upon authority to justify her own existing beliefs, including beliefs as to whom to believe. As Dandridge points out ...

"If my history book tells me that the story of King Arthur is true, and I accept this book as an authority, then I will retain my belief in the face of opposition." (p143)

It seems to us that this correlates approximately with the stage of procedural doubt in organisations. There is acceptance that alternative explanations and actions are possible. This is consistent, we think, with the appearance of the beginnings of a breakdown in plausibility (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), though it may also indicate a more relativistic attitude to morals (see later). Thus is a symbol led to the third stage.

Stage 3   Rationality or provability becomes the basis for accepting a symbolic belief at Stage 3. Unproven myths or non-rational rituals are discarded for having no basis in fact.

This would seem to follow naturally once a person stops believing the myth or valuing the ritual. This stage is associated organisationally with the early stages of the disintegration of sub-cultural groups. It represents their start on the path from

unquestioned acceptance to scepticism, and finally to rejection or disinterest.

This stage seems to be associated with both ideological and ethical doubt. It is indicative of a search for new perspectives and new values. In Dandridge's description the new values are those of rationalism; but the process might well be the same for other values.

Stage 4   This fourth stage involves some form of suspended disbelief. A form of belief survives despite disproof. Dandridge (p144) states "the spirit of Christmas, in the form of continuing tales of the founder or company president, or the survival of company emblems or rituals" seems to suggest that people need something they can project towards, an image that inspires hope.

The person now acts only as if she believed. In doing so it is possible for her to experience closer identification with the organisation and thereby express connections to a particular value. Through imagination she unites with the image associated with the value, empowering it as a symbol.

To our mind this description of the decline of a symbol is for the most part also a beautifully clear description of the decline of organisational culture.

Some reconciliation seems to be called for in relation to stage 4 (Dalmau and Dick, 1986a, p6). The stage of absolute doubt in the life cycle model presumes that in effect the organisation no longer exists. People are just waiting around until they leave physically; but they have already left spiritually, so to speak.

It may be, of course, that the declines of symbol and overall culture may not be entirely parallel. We would prefer, however, to integrate our views and those of Dandridge. Two possibilities occur to us.

One possibility is that some parts of behaviour which once had cultural significance persist after their supporting culture has died. We have experience enough of habitual behaviour persisting long after its rational source has vanished.

We have reported elsewhere that in earlier years gun-crews continued to contain a person to hold the reins of a horse long after trucks were used for traction. And a former colleague John Damm used to tell of the office where each morning a junior marked on a map the position of each person. Enquiry reportedly revealed that the original reason was so that their bodies could be identified if the enemy shelled the building. Some Japanese submarines had shelled Sydney during the war, and the practice began then. It continued after the war, long after members of the office had forgotten its significance.

There is no reason why behaviours that were originally significant culturally should not also outlive their culture.

An alternative explanation is that when people are locked into a culture and unable to leave, they may find it less trouble to observe the outward forms of the previous culture than to do anything else. People often talk, not because they have anything to say, but to affirm their relationships. Similarly, observing previously-cultural behaviour may be a way of recognising their colleagues as colleagues, even though the supposed purposes of the organisation no longer hold meaning for them.

In other instances we would expect cultural development to depart from Dandridge's description. As one culture declines, a meaning vacuum is created. In this vacuum we would expect cultural renewal in the form of new ethos, mores and rituals to take place. Our estimate is that this might often occur without changing the deepest levels of culture. Myth and paradigm, we think, are not easily changed. Under some circumstances they may be, but only in crisis or with considerable effort. We return to this issue later.

In partial summary ...

These ideas, then, will define the bounds within which we will think and talk about organisational culture in the rest of this paper. If we take them as our starting point, then a number of implications follow.

The first is that organisational culture is multi-layered. Its expressions range from the behavioural (rituals and artifacts) to the deep unconscious (mythology or basic assumptions). Therefore, one cannot talk simply of an organisational "culture": clarity requires specifying the level of expression. There may often be doubt about whether it is culture being expressed, or something else, particularly at the shallower levels.

Secondly, as Schein (1985) suggests, organisational culture changes over time in that it becomes more embedded into the "out-of-awareness" functioning of an organisation. It becomes more and more unconscious or automatic. Now the unconscious is not necessarily an orderly thing. Those parts of an organisation's culture which arise from its collective unconscious will not emerge or unfold in orderly ways (Krefting and Frost, p156).

Or at least not always. As we have said, it seems to us that in times of stability the deeper levels drop more and more out of consciousness. If you have been doing something for very long it may never occur to you to do it differently. By the time you eventually cease to notice there are any alternatives, then the whole business has become invisible.

In any event, proponents of orderly cultural change cannot easily claim that their efforts at change can be precisely predicted or tightly controlled. The process of working with organisational culture always involves unpredictability and risk.

Thirdly, the major components of an organisation's culture (its basic myths and assumptions), act as long-term memories. As with individual memory, they are the means by which the past and the future are taken into account in the present.

They are the means by which the present is interpreted. They find their expression in an organisation's behaviour, and its theories of action (Argyris and Schön, 1978) — its assumptions about which actions produce which consequences. The deeper components are in fact the source of an organisation's theories-in-use.

Argyris and Schön suggest that their approach can bring about a cognitive redefinition which can lead in turn to behaviour change. And indeed it does, for we have used modifications of it (Dick and Dalmau, 1990). However, in dealing with organisational culture, we are dealing with almost "mythical" knowledge within an organisation — its collective unconscious, if you like. It is very difficult to separate this clearly from the higher order abstractions which most members of organisations believe they act from. It is this comparison, between preaching and practice as you might say, which forms the content focus of much of Argyris and Schön's work. But behaviour change doesn't necessarily mean cultural change.

The nearer any manager or change agent comes to dealing with the underlying basic values and assumptions of an organisation, the more she is dealing with knowledge which emanates from mythical and pre-scientific sources. This narrows the range of options for managing and changing a culture quite dramatically (Gagliardi, p120).

Fourthly, there now arises an inherent paradox that any cultural change agent must face: organisational cultures usually change only in order to remain what they have always been (Gagliardi, p127). No social system will cooperate readily in its own spiritual annihilation. This paradox exists because those deeply unconscious elements of a culture (its basic assumptions and underlying values) tend to be enduring over long periods of time. They are very difficult to change in any orderly way.

In our view, some of what is called "cultural change" might more descriptively be called "change in mores" or "change in ethos". The confusion again seems to

arise because the term "culture" is used to refer to phenomena at all levels from behaviour to collective unconscious. Perhaps this is fair enough: they may all be levels of culture. But it does cause some ambiguity.

In fact, as organisations encounter new problems to which old solutions are no longer applicable, they do change. The change takes the form of developing new responses (behaviours, languages, stories, legends — rituals and artifacts in the terminology we developed earlier) and mores (more or less explicit governing rules and norms to interpret the world). Rarely need they undergo major shifts in the underlying values and basic assumptions which lie at the core of their culture.

As the later section on the second watershed will argue, some pervasive aspects of western culture have been around for a very long time indeed. If we had to estimate how long, we would suggest something of the order of 10 000 years, since the beginnings of agriculture. If true, that constitutes some sort of evidence for the relative permanence of culture.

Finally, to contemplate the engineering of cultural change in organisations is, in a sense, to violate the very function which culture in organisations serves.

Culture is patterned, and very potent. It becomes over time deeply embedded in the minds of an organisation's members at deeply unconscious levels. It provides an integrative perspective and meaning to all situations which an organisation encounters. It gives members a historical perspective and view of their emerging identity.

To find and attribute meaning in situations, as Victor Frankl (1964) pointed out, is one of the deepest human drives. It seems to us that organisational culture both serves this human need in a collective, and is an expression of it. In so being, it

also has a stabilising effect; for it tends to reduce both uncertainty and its associated anxiety. It provides predictability (Schein, p44).

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We have taken some pains to spell out the current form of the life cycle model, and to relate it to some of the literature. This is because it provides a set of assumptions we use in our theoretical and practical work with culture. It has taken a somewhat different form in each of our documents to date, and we thought the time had come to present it as it now is. No doubt it will change further; but as we write this it is almost up to date.

So this, in our present view, is culture. Can it be changed?

■ Interlude: can culture be changed?

The answer to this question is simply … "Maybe". As Martin (p95) points out, the very question provides a host of different responses from people and many find it very annoying for different reasons.

She draws a distinction, for the sake of argument, between two ends of a continuum of view on this question: the cultural pragmatists and the cultural purists.

Pragmatists and purists

In Martin's opinion, the pragmatists view culture as the key in any organisation to commitment, productivity and profitability. They argue that culture can be heightened. Indeed, they believe it has been and should be. They point to success stories to justify their case.

Their tools of cultural change range enormously in their scope and approach. Some are highly-active staged interventions extending over a long period of time; they delve into most aspects of organisational life. Others are relatively passive interventions. They assume that culture is relatively unmalleable — a potential obstacle to the desired change which must be worked around.

At their worst the cultural pragmatists are what Turner calls the "pop culture magicians" (Turner, p104).

The purists on the other hand find it ridiculous to talk of changing culture. In their view it emerges over time; it is not created by any specific behaviour by leaders or other members of the organisation. It is an expression of the collective's deepest needs, a means of endowing its experience with meaning.

Within this strand, people like Turner would suggest that planned, conscious attempts to manipulate culture are successful usually only to a very limited degree. They would explain that culture involves deep layers of human experience, an experience which arises whenever two or more people have a shared history which leads them to develop a culture at very deep and unconscious levels. They would say that we do not have the knowledge or the technologies to deal with such phenomena.

As our earlier discussion indicated, we probably lie somewhere between these two extremes.

On the one hand we accept that cultural phenomena are deep seated, and more often than not below awareness. Over the years we have become acutely aware of how difficult it is to bring about lasting, long-term change in the culture of organisations. On occasions we have sometimes been seduced into believing that such change has occurred at very deep levels, only to find out later that it was more at the level of ritual or mores than underlying myth or even ethos.

It seems to us, too, that many attempts at so-called cultural change focus on issues which can be addressed objectively. We would regard these more as producing changes in what is sometimes called organisational climate. It is less to do with meaning, and more with perceptions. For those who are interested, Denise Rousseau (1988) provides a summary of some useful distinctions between climate and culture.

We are also aware of those situations which are properly described as examples of the "as if" phenomenon. This concept was given to us by our friend and a senior manager Ann Kern in a recent discussion. It refers to the phenomenon

whereby managers, consultants, change agents and authors write and talk "as if" they have achieved or been part of major deep and underlying cultural change. They do this in the hope that if they talk, write, and behave in this way, it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy which in fact will engender such change.

We tend to think that this form of behaviour, at best, leads only to change at the shallower levels. At worst it may be little more than a seductive ploy for meeting personal needs, often of consultants.

Conditions of cultural change

On the other hand, we are aware of, have observed, and been part of situations which seem to have led to deep and lasting cultural change over the long term in organisations. Such situations, tend to fall into one of four groups ...

1   Some involve not a total organisation, but rather sub-cultures which fit the conditions for a unitary culture described above.

2   Some, which have occurred on a larger organisational scale, have followed more or less the pattern described in the literature on change using agricultural extension models. The change begins with (or at least involves in the early stages) a small group of opinion leaders and early adopters. The changes then spread to the middle-order adopters and then finally the later order adopters (Dalmau and Dick, 1986b). This category is a longer-term extension of "1" above.

3   Many involve whole but relatively small organisations, which also fit the conditions for a unitary culture, and also are led by circumstance to involve everyone in the change.

4   There are occasional examples of cultural change brought about in larger organisations by high-profile, charismatic and energetic leadership, often under conditions of crisis which demand a dramatic response to some challenge. Warren Bennis (for example 1989) has described some of the conditions under which this becomes possible. In the present context, the ability of leaders to "build meaning" is relevant (Bennis, 1984: p70).

Nor have such "success" stories arisen purely from interventions internal to the group or organisation. In some cases, they have been brought about by changes in technology or structure imposed by factors external to the organisation (Pennings and Gresov, p324).

Schein (1985: p5) has sounded a relevant warning. He cautions that the assumption that culture can and should be changed to suit our own purposes ("our" presumably being management) is fallacious. The desire to change culture, he points out, may become tantamount to destroying a group and creating a new one which will build or evolve a new culture. Such action may, at times, be appropriate. But when it is an unintended side effect of what would been an attempt to change culture, then the consequences are usually painful and unnecessary.

It seems to us, in fact, that it is hard to introduce cultural change without also changing some of the people. In our experience, very few people actually change their deepest presumptions about how social systems do or should operate. When organisations change it is often because the actual people making up the organisation have changed. For example, within the education system it is not unusual for an innovative principal to be followed to a new appointment by innovative teachers, while those less enamoured of innovation gradually transfer elsewhere. Where this is voluntary, it can be constructively encouraged.

In another context — that of changes in scientific paradigms — Thomas Kuhn (1970) holds that change does not occur only because it is needed. Until there is a clearly better alternative to adopt, people put up with what they have. We think this is true of change generally, not just of scientific paradigms. It is one of the conditions of change we have listed in a number of documents (including Dalmau, Dick and Boas, 1989).

In fact we would go further. Very few scientists, or probably anyone else, change the paradigm which they use. Instead, what happens is that a new paradigm is

adopted by a small group of scientists, from whom it may eventually spread. Similarly within most social systems: there is a counter-culture which, under the right conditions, may grow to displace the dominant culture. The agricultural extension model applied to cultural change may be thought of as advocating change by counter-culture.

In this connection, Noel Tichy (1983, p93) has noted that "emergent networks", spontaneous changes in structure, are a means by which organisations cope flexibly with changed circumstances. It occurs to us that, existing as they do outside the official structure, such structures are sometimes counter-cultural. When such structures become influential, they may well seed a new dominant culture in time. This can be pursued as a deliberate strategy.

But, quite apart from the issue of whether one wishes to change the culture, there is another issue. Does culture deserve attention?

Does culture deserve attention?

To this we would respond with an almost unqualified ... "Yes". In our experience a social system which understands its cultural underpinnings is better able to achieve joy and excellence than one which does not. The "excellence" literature (such as Peters and Waterman) supports this contention.

In short, we are neither as pessimistic as some recent writers nor as optimistic as some of the (particularly earlier) literature on cultural interventions. The pessimism which some exhibit may well stem from the deep-seated nature of cultural beliefs, and the emotion aroused by any challenge to them. But this is the characteristic of all emotionally-held "beliefs without reason".

We accept the intangibility and inexpressibility of the basic assumption level (or "myth" in the life-cycle model). All this means is that it is most likely to be approachable sideways, as it were, through those features of social life which

Lundberg calls artifact. It does not mean that an intervention addressed to the artifact level leaves deeper levels untouched.

Inevitably, what one sees is the world of behaviour and of objects. What one impinges upon is the world of senses. But it is through precisely such levels that the myth is first established, and (therefore) changed. We see no need to abandon the tools already developed merely because they operate with components of the artifact level. We have explored this in other documents (Dalmau and Dick, 1989; Dick and Dalmau, 1989).

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From the foregoing it may appear that although we think cultural intervention and change is possible, we are pessimistic about it. It is true that we regard it as usually slow, and fraught with uncertainty and risk. But this merely indicates that those who intervene will fare better if they do so with understanding. In fact we later offer some tentative suggestions for intervening in the cultural life of a social system. There is first some more background to be provided.

Preparing this document brought home to us clearly something we know but sometimes overlook. Culture is an unusually complex phenomenon, and in addition is particularly difficult to study. It pervades all levels of social existence. Yet we have suggested that it is often like studying something in night vision: when you look directly at it, it disappears. Studying it, and especially changing it, often demands indirect methods.

We have already reached a number of conclusions. All of these have implications for those who would diagnose or change culture.

Models can help provided one remembers that they are simplifications. A model is a snapshot of reality at a particular time and from one specific vantage point. If you can't approach a complex object directly you can often understand it better if you can study it from many different directions.

We therefore present a number of models which we have found helpful in thinking about these matters. Each of them has something to say about the nature of culture, and of politics and conflict. We begin by providing some of the wider context in the form of a model of social change. Then follows a presentation of two models which can illuminate some aspects of organisational culture. One (the culture grid) applies some ideas about national culture to organisations. The other takes some insights about interpersonal conflict and applies them at the level of the organisation.

We begin by standing well back, as it were, from the topic. At any time, culture may appear to be a somewhat accidental or random collection of customs. Take a wide enough perspective, however, and many cultural features may turn out to be relics of earlier times.

The following model is therefore one of evolutionary social change. It provides a historical perspective to the later more static models.

■ The second watershed

What follows is offered in the first instance as a taxonomic model of evolutionary mechanisms. We later apply the model to current social change. As the model has been described elsewhere (Dick, 1984, 1987), and may in due course be described in some detail, the account below is rather cursory. Our intention in presenting it is to allow us to draw some conclusions about the cultures which seem best able to cope with the likely future.

Before we do so, a caveat ... The model as presented here assumes that physical evolution is true. In fact we acknowledge it as a theory with substantial gaps still to be plugged. Its details are certainly unclear, and in many respects probably incorrect. It is nevertheless to our mind the most persuasive explanation of the evidence. However, we recognise that it is currently fashionable in some circles to challenge it. To those who disbelieve the existence of physical evolution, we would point out that our argument does not depend upon it. We invite such readers to judge the arguments for social evolution on their merits, and not automatically reject them.

The model

It is possible to consider people (and other living organisms) as problem solving mechanisms. Much of what they do is directed towards improving the match

between their needs (or their social system's needs) and the immediate or future environment — in other words, towards remedying a mismatch.

The solutions that people use in their problem solving have a number of distinct sources ...

■ Some are "hard-wired". They are built into the person through the normal processes of genetic inheritance.

■ Some are learned from others. Under this category we will make particular use of those which are acquired as part of the process of socialisation, whether primary (into a national culture) or secondary (into a profession or organisation or other social system).

■ Some are ad hoc. They are developed by the person, usually to deal with some problem for which neither genetics nor socialisation offers a solution.

In developing the model we will take these one at a time. Each will be considered as a component of a mechanism of evolution.

Physical evolution

It is arguably true that most organisms except the very simple draw upon all three sources of solutions. Species differ, however, in the importance different sources of solution hold in an organism's repertoire.

In a sense, the importance to our species of physical evolution is that it enables social evolution to emerge and to attain importance. These two mechanisms, physical and social evolution, are represented diagrammatically in Figure 11.

For social evolution to become an important reality, physical evolution must presumably provide certain preconditions. We would expect social evolution to be most likely to emerge only when physical evolution determines ...
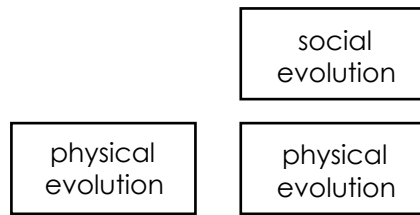
Fig. 11

Two evolutionary mechanisms. Social evolution depends upon there being an appropriate base of physical evolution

- that the organisms are social organisms; that is, that social life is an important part of their existence;

- that young organisms are dependent on their elders for some time; and

- that there is some suitable vehicle by which the solutions may be transmitted; we presume that this means some minimum level of abstract symbolic skills.

You may notice in passing that these are conditions which may predispose a species towards the development of culture. And indeed, it may be for the transmission of cultural values that social evolution is most important.

Social evolution

One might ask why a species would shift from a system of physical evolution; it is, after all, simpler and therefore less fragile. The reason, we presume, is that social evolution is a faster mechanism of adjustment. One doesn't have to wait for the genetic make-up of a species to change; one can merely change their socialised beliefs. (You will recognise from the first part of the monograph that it may be still a considerable change.)

The socialised beliefs which are the vehicle for social evolution are those which support the structures and relationships of the social system. It is on these grounds that we believe that social evolution is to a large extent cultural evolution. It changes substantially the conditions which determine survival. You will recall that, in our earlier definition of culture, we offered it as the

memory by which a social system, a collective, strives to secure its spiritual and physical existence.

We will later argue that the shift from physical to social evolution is a watershed which separates us from other species on Earth.

There is potentially a further mechanism of evolution: that which encourages the development of ad hoc solutions.

Ad hoc solutions

A system of social evolution depends upon the prior existence of a supporting physical evolution; so does the development of ad hoc solutions rest upon a particular type of social inheritance. It is a characteristic of this third type that socialisation does not prepare the individual with solutions, but with the capacity to develop solutions. Individual growth (or individual evolution) is therefore an important component.

The potential of this further mechanism may be as great as that of the shift from physical to social evolution. We therefore call the transition the second watershed. Figure 12 summarises the model.
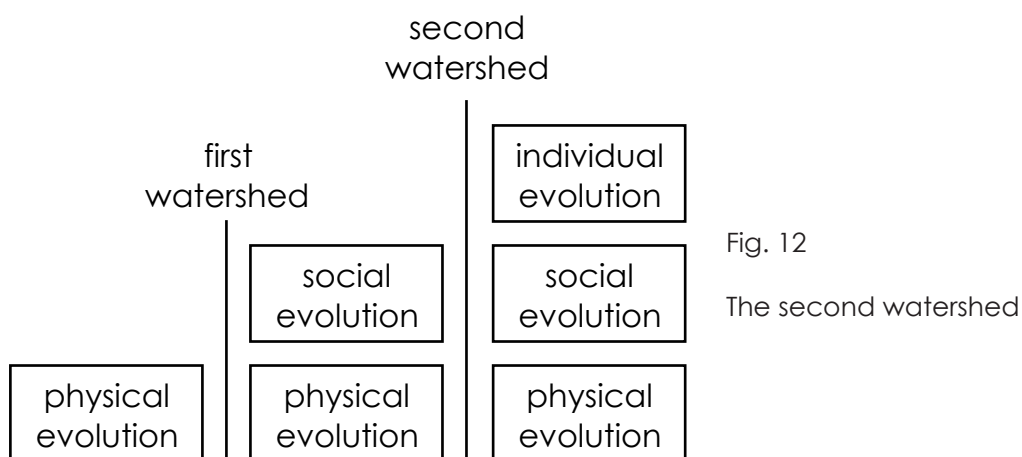

Fig. 12

The second watershed

As so far presented, the second watershed model has been more of a logical taxonomy than a theory of social change. The empirical question is: does the model have anything to say about the present human condition? And if so, what are the implications for cultural change, including within organisational cultures?

To apply the model requires that we develop a description of the transitions from physical evolution to social evolution, and from social evolution to whatever lies beyond it.

Cultural transitions

We developed the model in terms of "solutions". A solution is a way of reacting to potentially problematic environmental conditions. The transitions might therefore be expected to be accompanied by environmental change.

The first point to be made is that, although many of the vertebrates show a capacity for social learning, in none of them does it so strongly displace the effects of genetics as in our species. We therefore assume that the first watershed is, truly, a watershed: it is what separates us from other species. It is what makes "civilisation", as we know it, possible.

In fact it can be argued that physical evolution has ceased to be an important vehicle for human change. It is far too slow to adjust to the changes we have wrought in the environment. The survival of the individual is now determined more by events at levels beyond the individual: the quality of medical care, the standards of hygiene, the wealth and influence of the immediate social systems of which a person is part, and so on.

There is a common tendency to think of our social evolution in terms of technological advancement, where "technology" is taken to mean material and scientific technology. It is easy to underestimate or even overlook the part which

social inventions play in all of this. Our methods for structuring organisations, for teaching our children, for organising our social systems ... these all play an important part in determine the nature of our existence. As we understand them, the changes which the second watershed represents consist largely of changes in the nature of social inventions.

One way of coming to an understanding of the second watershed, the transition beyond taught solutions, is to compare and contrast it to the first watershed. To this we proceed.

Physical and social evolution compared

Consider this equation. Physical evolution depends upon the mechanism of natural selection. The theory holds that there is variation in the gene pool, and that environmental conditions "select" those individuals best equipped genetically. People who survive to child-bearing age pass on their genetic endowment. Those genetic characteristics which better equip people for survival therefore increase within the gene pool.

In physical evolution, the individual survives or not because of the genetic endowment. Genes are the code by which the solutions are transmitted from generation to generation.

In short, we possess our genetically-inherited solutions because we are the offspring of others who carried those solutions in their genes, and survived.

We have already implied that after the first watershed it is no longer the individual who is the unit of survival. Social systems as a whole survive or fail. Those who survive perpetuate what enables their survival; that is, their social solutions, the way they manage relationship and structure — their culture.

Within recorded human history, those social systems which have become large and technically complex have passed on their social structures to others.

The criterion for selection is still survival. The unit is now the system. And the code consists of the beliefs which maintain the social structures (see Table 1). To repeat the equation we gave earlier, structure ≅ relationship ≅ belief, with beliefs as the code for relationship and structure.

Table 1: A comparison of physical and social evolution

	Physical evolution	**Social evolution**
Unit selected	Individual	System
Code of selection	Genetic	Conceptual
Criterion of selection	Survival	Survival

Social rules and cultural evolution

In a very real sense, then, the "genetic code" of social evolution consists of the basic assumptions about social phenomena. These are assumptions which are so widely shared that they constitute a collective unconscious. They are in large part equivalent to the basic assumptions which form the deepest level of Lundberg's deepest level of culture: in our terminology, the myth.

And yet, beliefs of themselves have little effect on behaviour. People believe many things, often with a strong intellectual commitment, and yet manage not to act on it. Clearly, beliefs of themselves are not enough. There must be more to it.

To become aware of what else is needed, notice what happens when important cultural beliefs are challenged. The people thus threatened become highly emotional. They have somehow learned to react to threat with anger or distress.

We suggest that the major vehicle of socialisation does not consist of the espoused beliefs which are conveyed by deliberate teaching. Rather, they consist of the beliefs and feelings which are soaked up through observation and modelling, are reinforced in subtle ways without reason being involved, and are unconscious. In the formation of culture, the causative arrow runs mostly from behaviour to the deeper levels.

Think of this now as an evolutionary process. Solutions are transmitted from generation to generation. The code in which they are transmitted comprises ideas about structure and relationship and social existence — Dawkins (1976), in *The selfish gene*, called them memes. Because the process often operates outside awareness it is barely noticed.

In short, we have been taught in ways which leave the learning invisible and below awareness. We are explicitly taught not to address the learning — consider the vehemence of the reaction against some of the social studies programs which try to encourage people to think about the nature of culture. And to inoculate us against evidence, the teaching provides no reason, or spurious reasons, for much of what we have been taught. Rather, we have been taught to feel bad when we behave in certain ways, or even think of doing so.

The "genetic code" of culture consists of tightly associated compounds of beliefs and feelings, often without reason and below awareness. They address, primarily, the nature of correct social behaviour; that is, how from a given role we should relate to a person in another given role. As beliefs (and feelings) equate with relationship and structure, they code mostly for social structures.

Coding for social structures

Stand back, if you can, from the social systems of which you are part. What are their most important characteristics? The almost universal answer is …

■ hierarchy; and

■   specialisation.

As we have said, organisations function to coordinate effort and expertise in the pursuit of organisational goals. They do so by splitting into sub-systems and into levels. The structure which results is like the popular view of an organisation chart, or a triangular shape such as that of Figure 13.
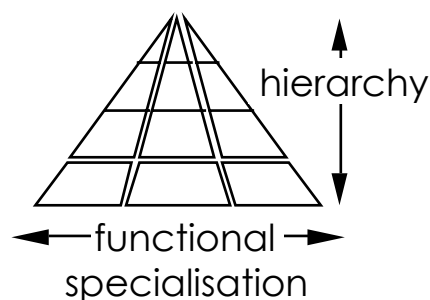

Fig. 13

The structures of our social systems are part of our social inheritance; the common form of such organisations depends on hierarchy and specialisation

The structures which characterised the armies of Caesar, 2000 years ago, were not all that different. These structures have been so successful that they have become almost universal. Families, and even sometimes social groups, are not all that different in their informal structures.

Now examine the types of behaviour which this produces. Superiors take responsibility for subordinates' behaviour. Subordinates, as a consequence, do not. Behaviour is heavily dependent on roles: who can say what to whom is determined by the place of both speaker and listener within the structure.

Beyond the second watershed

Beyond the second watershed different conditions apply. We can begin to understand their nature if we investigate what is taught.

We first presented the model in terms of sources of solutions, which we here review in the form of a diagram (Figure 14). Physical evolution transmits

hard-wired solutions from generation to generation: reflexes and instincts. Social evolution transmits ideas, in the form of beliefs with emotion but often without reason: for example attitudes to authority, parenthood, "morals" and the like.

Beyond the second watershed the solutions are developed ad hoc, to suit the circumstances. The ideas which are transmitted, then, must somehow encourage people to devise their own solutions when they are faced with novel situations.
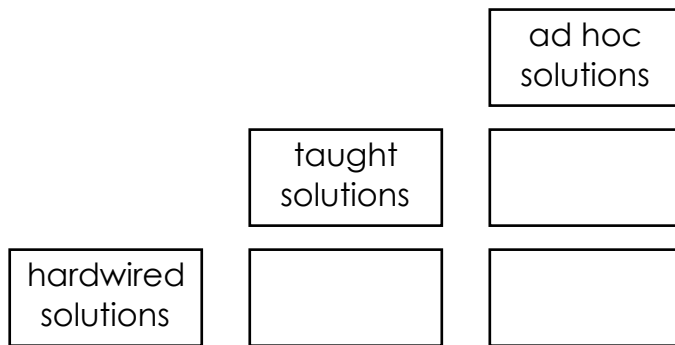

Fig. 14

The sources of solutions within each of the evolutionary mechanisms

It is more instructive, therefore, to focus on what is taught. If people are not taught solutions directly, then they must be taught whatever it is they need to develop solutions: that is, strategies which enable solutions to be devised (Figure 15).
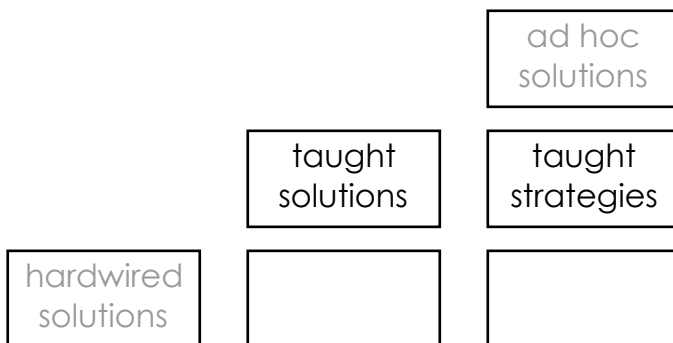

Fig. 15

The focus of teaching before and after the second watershed

Compare the nature of teaching before and after the transition. Pre-second-watershed teaching says "This is what you must do, and this is how you must do it, and the issue is not debatable". Socialisation prepares people to take their place in a wider culture, and to question neither the culture nor their place in it, at least not in ways which risk disturbance to the status quo.

After the transition the pattern changes to "Here is how to define the situation, identify the options, and decide which is best under the circumstances". And note, it is social behaviour and beliefs about social structure which we are talking about here. The move is one from absolute moral teaching to relativistic moral teaching.

This is, truly, a watershed; it is a virtual revolution in cultural values which have previously remained relatively unchanged for a very long time. As social systems like organisations import the new values of the wider culture, they too unavoidably undergo cultural change.

Note, too, that to question pre-transition values is likely to be taboo. Cultural change has to proceed under the rules which prevailed under the old culture. The efforts of those who seek change is judged against the criteria and behaviours of the current culture. It is indeed a matter of lifting ourselves up by our own bootstraps.

The changes are those, in Chris Argyris' terms, from Model I to Model II (Table 2). He has documented in a number of places the difficulties of bringing the basic assumptions of Model I to the surface so that they can be challenged (e.g. Argyris, 1982).

There are many current changes which we would interpret as evidence for the transition across the second watershed. To identify just a few ...

Table 2: A comparison of Argyris' Model I and
Model II action strategies (after Argyris, 1982)

Model I action strategies	Model II action strategies
Control environmental factors unilaterally	Design for high personal causation
Own and control the task	Task is controlled jointly
Unilaterally protect self	Self protection a joint enterprise
Unilaterally protect others from hurt	Bilateral protection of others

■ the adoption as an espoused value of "learning to learn" in many different educational settings;

■ a move to a pluralistic society; in Australia the current Labor government encourages "multiculturalism" in place of the earlier assimilation of immigrants;

■ a growth in a belief in relativistic rather than absolute systems of ethics;

■ a growth in participation and equity in a variety of settings;

■ a greater emphasis on skills as opposed to facts (or opinions offered as facts) in education;

■ the decriminalisation of victimless "crimes".

These and other similar changes (and some of the patterns which underlie them) are documented by Marilyn Ferguson (1980) and Alvin Toffler (1980, 1984).

Within social systems there is a corresponding shift towards ...

■ equal opportunity;

■ participation and equity;

■ matrix organisations, and even more fluid forms of organisational structure;

■ more individual responsibility;

and the like. Where previously a superior was responsible for the behaviour of subordinates, now they are themselves responsible. Their superior concerns

herself only about the goals they attain. Where previously a superior was responsible for coordinating the effort and expertise of subordinates, now often they are responsible for their own teamwork and coordination.

As evidence for the second watershed, this is still rather fragile. In any event, the model was initially developed to explain the patterns within just such changes as we have just listed. This alone, some would think, is a challenge to its validity.

There is, however, a line of subsidiary evidence on which we can draw. It follows.

Logically, up to certain rates of change, a pre-second-watershed system of evolution is to be preferred. Being less complex it is more robust. If the behaviour which worked well for the previous generation still fits the current situation, a system which maintains that behaviour within the next generation is appropriate.

As an evolutionary mechanism, its disadvantage is that it may be unable to cope with certain rates of change. Think of it this way. When a large number of the solutions we have been taught no longer fit a changing world, we are much more likely to be tempted to question the solutions. When the half life of a solution is less than a generation, a move to taught strategies becomes advantageous. Only then can we use those strategies to work out appropriate behaviour.

In short, ...

■   We can do something because our genetic make-up leaves us no choice. As with much of the social behaviour of the insects, if a certain solution is prewired we can do nothing except persist in behaviours which have become inappropriate or even suicidal.

■   We can do it because our socialisation leaves us no choice. As with much human social behaviour, situations short of suicidal may be dealt with as tradition prescribes.

■   We can analyse and choose because we have learned to analyse and choose, thereby suiting our behaviour to the requirements of the situation.

These three alternatives are the three evolutionary stages of the second watershed model. The transition from genetic evolution to social evolution we have called the first watershed. The second watershed is the transition from taught behaviours ("This is the only right thing to do") to taught strategies ("Here is how to analyse the situation and work out what to do").

The resulting behaviours determine the types of conflict which emerge and the way in which those conflicts are resolved (compare the behaviour described in Table 2, Argyris' Model I and Model II behaviour.) The strategies which people use to prepare for conflict constitute the politics of the social system of which they are part. As we have said, conflict and politics are cultural phenomena; conflict management and political behaviours are strategies we use to manage our social environment.

There are present changes taking place in approaches to politics and conflict management. We see these as closely related to the structural changes which are also occurring.

Structural change

An important part of culture, we have argued, is to do with structures (and thus relationships and beliefs about relationships). It is therefore appropriate that structure features so prominently in the changes taking place around us. This is true both of cultures as a whole, and within organisations of many types.

At some time before the dawn of history two important social inventions were developed: hierarchy and regimentation. Our guess is that it coincided with the shift from hunter-gatherer societies to agricultural societies, which made survival dependent on size and specialisation. This may have taken place 10 000

years or so ago, perhaps even more. Hierarchy and regimentation are almost universally used strategies for achieving coordination through control, and have been for a very long time.

Now, and we presume it is as part of the second watershed, hierarchy and regimentation are being replaced by other strategies for coordination.

The reason for the change is similar to that for the second watershed transition. Environmental change for many organisations is so great that control from the centre is no longer possible. Formerly, people serving similar functions and roles were grouped together so that those above them in the hierarchy could better control them. Now some organisations deliberately group unlike people so that they can together address whole tasks without requiring coordination from above.

In short, the shift in structure is from that shown previously in Figure 13 to that of Figure 16. Project teams, and even more temporary structures, characterise the structures at the workface. Elsewhere, regular meetings and permanent and temporary committees and working parties are needed to keep the organisation functioning as a unit.
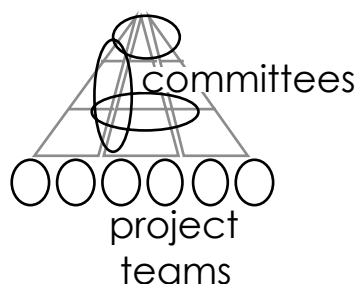

Fig. 16

In many organisations, the functionally specialised units at the workface are being replaced by multidisciplinary project teams, and the use of committees is growing

Since the first edition we have also had the benefit of some important research by David Limerick and his colleagues at Griffith University (Limerick and others, 1984; Cunnington and Limerick, 1986, 1987). They report that chief executives in

leading organisations, for practical reasons, are now espousing ideas which are very similar to those we offered on theoretical grounds.

For example, compare the scenario we have presented to the material which chief executives talk about. The four themes which Cunnington and Limerick (1986, 1987) identify in what chief executive officers say they are required to be ...

■ a manager of networks, through maintaining relationships with other key players in the system;

■ a manager of self, able to cope with seeming paradox, ambiguity, novel problems; and sufficiently mature to lead in ways which empower others rather than subjugate them;

■ a manager of meaning, developing the sense of shared identity and purpose which is derived from the organisation's culture; and

■ a manager of paradox, willing at one time to stand up for one's own values while recognising and working with the different values of others; willing, too, to accept the apparent paradoxes and seek out their reconciliation. Presumably this does not mean, as it did for Dandridge (see earlier), that decline of symbols necessarily follows.

To us, that sound like the type of manager required on the far side of the second watershed.

In particular, there is a strong trend in some organisations towards a form of relationship which the Griffith team label "collaborative individualism". By a happy accident, in our first edition of this paper we used the phrase "cooperative individualism", as we still do in the next chapter. What is interesting is that our proposal was offered on theoretical grounds, derived from the second watershed model. The Griffith team reports what chief executives and senior managers in our leading organisations are now saying.

More recently, Limerick (1990) reports that organisations are moving towards even more fluid and temporary structures. The organisations of the future may

therefore change their shape regularly, and appear more like the diagram of
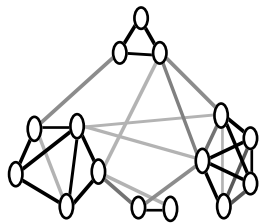Figure 17.

Fig. 17

In many of tomorrow's organisations, the
structures may directly reflect the current and
temporary interdependencies in the
organisation

In engaging with this, let us not forget that structure has its correlates at group
level (that is, role relationships) and individual level (that is, beliefs). An
important part of what is changing, comprises beliefs about people and beliefs
about self. In particular, if we are to be more responsible for our own problem-
solving, we will have a need for a greater self-esteem than often characterises
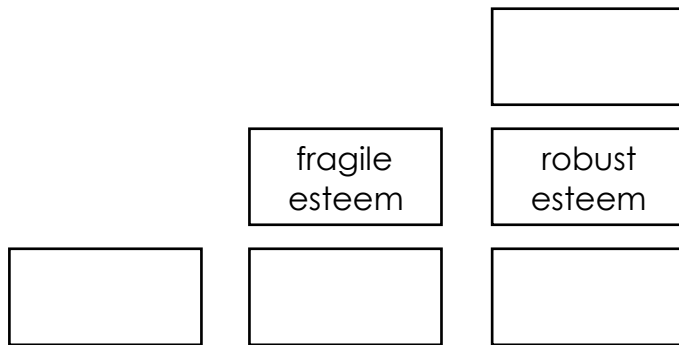people in developed cultures (Figure 18).

fragile
esteem

robust
esteem

Fig. 18

Individual responsibility
requires high self-esteem,
where control requires fragile
self-esteem

In partial summary ...

As we interpret the evidence, the developed world is undergoing the transition we have called the second watershed. While it might be possible to arrest the transition by slowing down the rate of change, we see little evidence that this is so. On present indications the transition will continue.

The transition may not always be visible, being gradual and drawn out over long periods of time. Imposed on the long term trend are the more apparent short term pendulum-swings as a counter-culture first gains dominance, and is overwhelmed by the backlash, and is built up again by the backlash against the backlash ... On balance, though, we think it can now be said that western society is crossing the watershed.

The implications are many, though we would like to single out three for special mention.

Firstly, organisations and other social systems may have no choice in whether or not to engage in cultural change, for it may be upon them. So much of their culture is imported from the wider community that the repercussions within the system may be unavoidable. The present interest in culture, we suspect, reflects this.

Secondly, if we are correct about the transition, we are collectively engaged in a bootstrap operation. We are faced with the difficulties of managing cultural change while immersed in a culture which opposes the changes. To assume that we can predict the correct answers ahead of time therefore seems perilous. In consequence, we expect the field of cultural change to undergo considerable change itself for some time yet.

Thirdly, an important part of the changes has to do directly with structure and relationship. They involve beliefs, emotionally held but not accessible to reason, about the right way to build a social system or to relate to another person.

Structural change which ignores the culture and the people faces extreme difficulties. We notice evidence (for instance from the Griffith University team, above) that the links between culture and structure will increasingly be acknowledged.

———————

We began by discussing culture generally, and identifying some of the issues pertinent to its study. We then stood back from this and used the second water-shed model to provide one glimpse of the shape of culture and its historical context. We now step down an order of magnitude, so to speak, to discuss those patterns of organisational culture which are imported from the wider culture in which an organisation is located.

The following section therefore examines the espoused beliefs and the actual behaviours that characterise commonly-experienced cultures.

■ Cultural style

Some of the same dimensions of cultural style which occur within pair relationships, also occur at social system level and within nation states. Here we focus on two.

Both dimensions describe how relationships are managed. The first dimension is to do with the relationship between individual and state or between individual and social system. The second dimension refers to the relationship between individual and individual. (To this we could have added the relationships between sub-system and sub-system, sub-system and system, system and system, system and environment.)

It is by managing the two types of relationships that social systems themselves are structured and managed. These types of relationship comprise a large part of what is termed "culture"; the changes implied by the second watershed include changes in these relationships.

Dimensions of national culture

The dimensions may be portrayed as a grid, as in Figure 19. The dimension of individual-system relationships is defined by its end points: individualist and collectivist. That of individual-individual relationships has as its poles, competitive and cooperative.
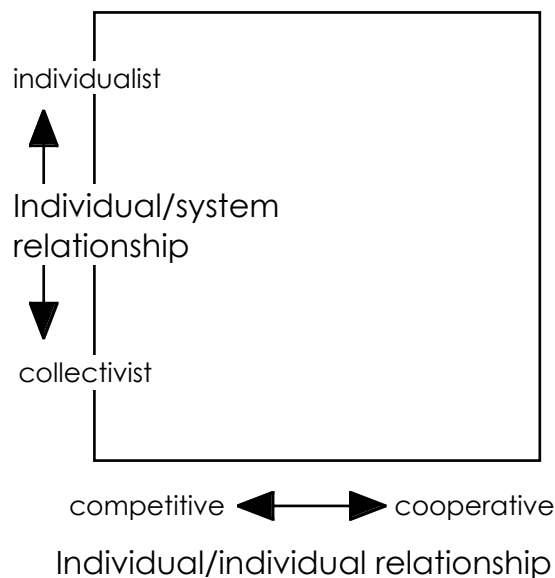
Fig. 19

Dimensions of the culture
of social systems

Perhaps these dimensions require further definition ...

■ By competitive we mean a culture where it is generally assumed that one person's gain is another person's loss, or where people's behaviour usually produces this outcome.

■ By cooperative we mean a culture where it is generally assumed that one person's gain also benefits others, or where people's behaviour is usually directed towards joint decision making which seeks to meet the needs of all.

■ By individualist we mean a culture where it is generally assumed that in a conflict between collective and individual, the rights of the individual are held supreme short of the point where others are adversely affected, or where people's behaviour demonstrates this respect for individual rights.

■ By collectivist we mean a culture where it is generally assumed that it is appropriate for individual rights to be sacrificed to collective goals, or where people's behaviour usually demonstrates this willingness to place the collectivity ahead of the individual.

If we compare the espoused cultures of the two major blocs of nation states in the world, it is not difficult to assign them positions on this grid. The United States

(and other western espoused democracies) acknowledge their allegiance to competition while claiming that the individual is paramount. One might therefore locate them somewhere towards the top left hand corner of the grid. The USSR and its satellites admit to being collectivist, but also claim to be cooperative. On the grid they are therefore diametrically opposite the western bloc. Figure 20 displays this.
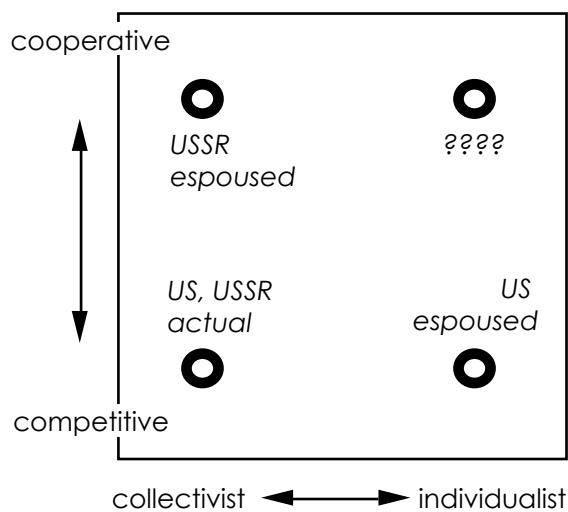

Fig. 20

National cultures located on the "culture grid".

These are espoused positions. It seems to us, however, that the reality is somewhat different. In both blocs it is usual for the individual to be sacrificed to collective goals. In both it is typical that one person's gain is more often than not another person's loss. As the figure shows, we locate both blocs in the lower left quadrant.

The reason is to be found in the nature of large social systems. We have already discussed some of the issues. The way in which large social systems are constructed tends to group like with like through functional specialisation and hierarchical specialisation. The resulting sub-cultures then give priority to their own local goals, and compete with one another.

Each sub-system, in pursuing its own survival, frequently sacrifices the individual to this end if necessary. The spin-off from sub-system survival is hardening of the structural arteries for the overall system. Attempts at change on the part of the overall system are thwarted by the vested interests of the sub-systems which fear that their existence is threatened by the change.

The other interesting feature about the grid is that it reveals a missing quadrant. Where are the cooperative individualist cultures of the upper right? In fact, in the preceding chapter they are identified as the cultures of the future in organisations, or in our terms, the post-second-watershed culture.

The missing culture

And as it happens, there is a political philosophy corresponding to the missing quadrant. We hesitate, almost, to name it: anarchism. As a system of politics it advocates that the only constraints which can validly be placed on any individual are those that prevent that individual constraining others. The assumption is that, left to their own devices, people are mature and responsible.

Compare this to the commonly held meaning of "anarchist": someone in cloak and dark hat fostering upheaval and throwing bombs.

A little reflection will reveal that people who genuinely subscribe to anarchism as a political philosophy do not throw bombs. Throwing bombs places the ultimate constraint on others by depriving them of their very existence. (We suspect, too, that true anarchists would be individualist enough to resist being labelled, whether as anarchist or anything else.)

In fact, if the second watershed is a reality then we would expect some replacements for regimentation and hierarchy. People capable of developing solutions to fit the current situation are people of high self-esteem; they are allowed high levels of individual responsibility within the social systems they

inhabit. It is no accident that project teams in organisational settings are characterised by relatively egalitarian relationships and high individual autonomy. In other words, they are nearer to anarchistic in their structures than are work teams in more conventional organisations.

———————

We have just examined a two-dimensional grid which relates to cultural style. The two dimensions concerned the relationships between individual and system, and between individual and individual. Let us take a moment to relate these dimensions to what has preceded, and what is to follow.

Taken together, the dimensions can be seen to relate to the concept of culture. We are reminded of the recurring themes in the organisational excellence literature, that excellent organisations are characterised by a shared vision and a concern for people. Within the life-cycle model, the level of myth (corresponding to Lundberg's basic assumptions) is about identity and unity (see Dalmau and Dick, 1986a). These are determined by the existence of a defined and accepted relationship between individual and system. An important part of how they are realised is affected by the relationship between individual and individual.

It will not have escaped your attention that politics relates above all to how the individual-system relationship is managed. Conflict emerges from the nature of the individual-individual relationship, and the sub-system relationship.

Many of the changes we foresee as part of the second watershed are changes in these relationships.

In the preceding material, conflict phenomena have often been mentioned but not often described. It is time to add a consideration of conflict to the developing story ...

In what follows, we first take a well-known model of individual- individual relationships. It is the conflict grid of Thomas and Kilmann, one of a number of

closely related two-dimensional grids. We chose it because it relates specifically to conflict, and because it allows a convenient description of which relationship styles fit which types of situation.

After describing it, we extend it to develop some guidelines for knowing when to use a particular style. We then apply it to behaviour at system rather than relationship level.

■ The conflict grid

Thomas and Kilmann have made frequent use of the conflict grid to explain styles of conflict resolution (Thomas and Kilmann, 1974; Thomas, 1976).

The dimensions of the Thomas-Kilmann grid, as it is often known, are labelled cooperation (or attempting to satisfy the other person's concerns) and assertiveness (attempting to satisfy ones own concerns).

Five conflict management strategies result: collaborating (satisfying both concerns), compromising (partially satisfying both), competing (satisfying ones own), accommodating (satisfying the other person), and avoiding (seeking to satisfy neither). Figure 21 shows these five styles on the grid.
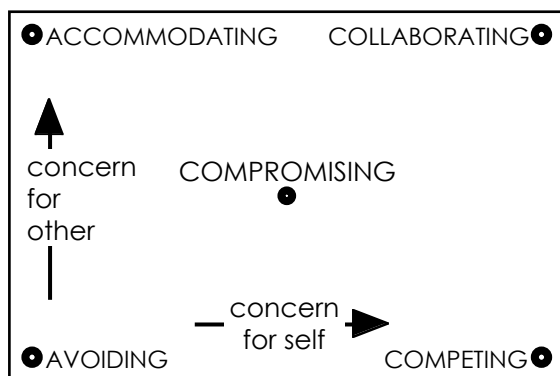

Fig. 21

The Thomas-Kilmann conflict grid

It is conventional to say that each of these styles is sometimes appropriate, and Thomas and Kilmann define some of the situations where each of them is indicated. We are more interested in defining the general conditions which

govern the choice. To develop guidelines we ask you to consider two further dimensions, long-term vs short-term, and type of conflict.

At this point, too, we will use the model to relate to conflict between groups and particularly sub-cultures. The same considerations apply to individual-individual conflict.

Some contingencies

In what follows, it is important to bear in mind a distinction between situations and strategies. We are going to discuss both situations and strategies in terms of four types, here applied to situations ...

- Win/win situations are those where one sub-culture's gain is another's gain. Mutually-satisfactory outcomes are possible.

- In win/lose situations one sub culture's benefit is at a cost to the other. That sub-culture which is the focus of the analysis can be expected to benefit.

- Lose/win situations are win/lose situations from the other side of the table. The focal sub-culture is likely to lose, to provide the benefits which the other sub-culture achieves.

- Lose/lose situations are those where both sub-cultures can expect to lose if the issue is surfaced.

We intend to treat the five styles of the conflict grid as strategies for political interventions, to handle conflict between sub-cultures. We originally described these strategies for one-on-one conflict (Dick, 1977), but they can be as easily applied to conflict situations involving other sized groups of people.

Look first at the strategies which lie along the diagonal from bottom left to top right. These, we suggest, are effective long-term strategies.

It is instructive to examine the styles of conflict which are common in different situations. Much of the organisation development literature recommends cooperative, or win/win, strategies. Part of the OD espoused theory is that such strategies are usually possible. Obviously, it is better for sub-cultures to cooperate when this leaves both of them better off.

On the other hand there are win/lose situations where one sub-culture's gain is another's loss. Under these circumstances cooperation is more difficult. Compromising (by which we mean bargaining or negotiation or "horsetrading") is better for those who have the best chance of obtaining what they want: a win/lose position. For those who will be least well off, the situation is lose/win and avoidance is better.

Finally, if both sub-cultures are likely to lose through any close examination of the issue (lose/lose), avoidance is again recommended.

Figure 22 shows the three long-term strategies related to the grid.

COLLABORATING
Optimal for win/win
situations

COMPROMISING
Optimal for win/lose
situations (I win)

AVOIDING
Optimal for win/lose
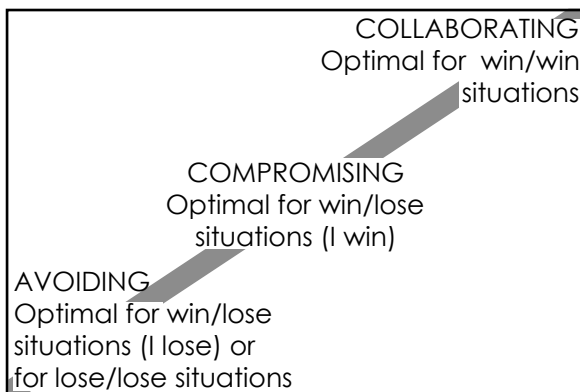situations (I lose) or
for lose/lose situations

Fig. 22

Long term strategies on the conflict grid

When the situation is win/win it is in the interests of all concerned to cooperate. When it is lose/lose there is again no difficulty in agreeing on an approach. But if it is win/lose, one sub-culture wishes to use compromise while the other

would prefer to avoid the situation. It is in this third situation that the short-term strategies come into importance (Figure 23).
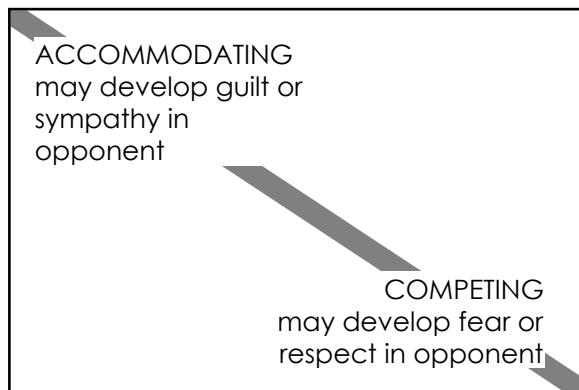
ACCOMMODATING
may develop guilt or
sympathy in
opponent

COMPETING
may develop fear or
respect in opponent

Fig. 23

Short-term strategies on the conflict grid

The strategies can therefore be summed up like this ...

■   If both sub-cultures can get most of what they want by agreeing, use cooperative processes. These processes are described below as consensual.

■   If one sub-culture's gain is another's loss, but your side has the better position, you can afford to use compromise. You can do well using bargaining approaches (later referred to as adversarial processes); you can afford to give the other side a better payoff than they would expect, to retain their respect and to build up trust for future cooperation.

■   If it is win/lose, and your side is likely to lose, you will do better to avoid compromise if you can. If the other side can insist on a compromise approach you may be able to improve your position using short-term strategies. We have more to say of this shortly.

The model so far is quite simple; its actual use depends upon being able to translate the general descriptions above into more specific actions. The purpose of the next section is to provide some tools for doing this.

Applications to political interventions

The following discussion will be simpler if we first introduce the notion of three types of process, partly alluded to above. The following descriptions define the three types.

■ Adversarial processes include debate, and those commonly used in such settings as politics and the courts. Each side presents an argument, hoping to have their view prevail. One or the other of the views is taken in its entirety.

The decision may be made by an independent arbiter; if not, the side with the most power is typically able to achieve its ends.

This is a simplified account. In practice many issues are typically decided as part of one session. One party's view prevails for some issues, the other party's for other issues. Viewed overall, the consequent outcome may be partial win/partial win. For any particular issue it may still be win/lose or lose/win.

■ Consensual processes use joint decision making to agree on a mutually-satisfying outcome. They are therefore at their most effective when it is possible to reach a decision which is fully satisfying to all parties. For present purposes we will use the term consensual to refer to processes which identify issues on which the two sides are potentially agreed, and work with those issues.

In other words, this is collaboration when it is easy to collaborate. You might call it soft consensus.

■ Dialectical processes instead focus on issues about which the two sides disagree. Instead of one of the two positions being chosen, the people involved exchange information with the intention of identifying a view to which they can both agree. The effect is to expand the area of agreement between the two sides.

This too is collaboration. But it depends on rather more goodwill from both parties if the potential disagreement is to be turned into agreement. You might call it hard consensus.

Figure 24 shows the three types of process diagrammatically.

a
adversarial
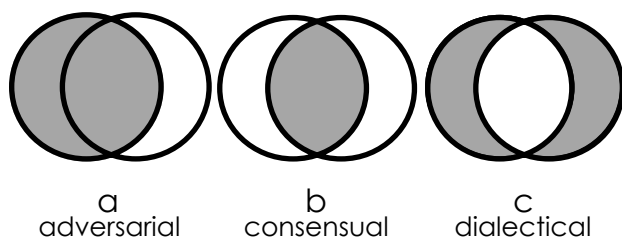
b
consensual

c
dialectical

Fig. 24. Suppose the two circles in each diagram represent two points of view. With pure adversarial processes (a), one of a number of options prevails, while consensual processes (b) work with those issues on which people are in agreement. Dialectical processes (c) focus on disagreements, using them to increase the area of agreement.

The two overlapping circles represent the positions of two parties to the situation. In adversarial processes, each party focusses on the information which supports its own position. Soft consensual processes encourage both to focus on issues on which they can agree. Dialectical processes focus on disagreements, but with a view to converting them into agreements. The two-party summary of Figure 24 can be generalised to multi-party situations.

It is clear, then, that there are two forms of win/win process. Soft consensus is appropriate when mutual satisfaction is easily won by focussing on agreements. When the agreements must be laboriously and sometimes painfully constructed out the the disagreements, dialectical processes are required. The Thomas-Kilmann grid might be altered to correspond to Figure 25.

As already mentioned, adversarial processes are in common use. In fact, they are often treated as the default process to use in the event of a dispute. There is the risk that one party will be entirely the victor, and the other party quite vanquished. To avoid this, it is usual for adversarial processes to be used to deal
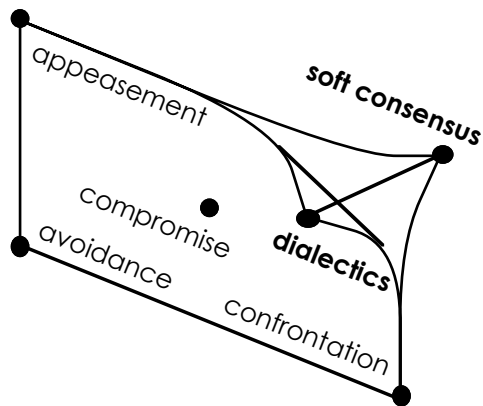
Fig. 25

Consensus on the Thomas-Kilmann grid can be subdivided into soft consensus, and hard consensus or dialectics

with multiple issues. One party may then be victorious on some of these issues, and the other party on others.

When there is a high amount of overlap in the positions of two or more sides, consensual processes are likely to work well and to be more productive than adversarial processes. Our culture often works on the assumption that interests are opposed (see later); the most difficult part may therefore be persuading the parties to engage in consensual processes.

In general, consensual processes are probably indicated whenever there is a shared culture (more of this later) and the decisions to be made are not regarded as contentious in that culture. Under these circumstances the agreement is usually greater than anyone would have expected, and easy to identify.

Miniature searches such as those described in Search (see Dalmau, Dick and Boas, 1989) use consensual processes. They increase the potential for agreement by asking people to define a future ideal. It is often the case that people are more agreed on ends than on means, and high agreement can arise. The process works by identifying those issues on which there is high agreement. These issues then become the focus for more detailed joint planning.

Probably one of the best known examples of a dialectical process is Delphi. A common use is for a panel of experts to exchange views by mail a number of

times. At each of the multiple rounds (often three) each panel member either amends her view in the direction of any emerging consensus, or provides information to justify her view.

Conducting the process by mail removes some of the face-to-face antagonism of adversarial processes. Provided the process is well-managed it is possible to use face-to-face versions of Delphi. One is described in *Helping groups to be effective*. It can be extended to intergroup situations.

The difficulty in using dialectical processes is in persuading the most powerful party to agree to their use. Those most likely to do well out of adversarial processes may well prefer to use them. Those lacking power or influence over the decision may also be unable to persuade the others to adopt a process which promises a fairer outcome. The powerful may fear it may be less favourable than they could expect to arise from adversarial processes.

The difficulty, then, arises from unequal power between the two parties. If an outsider such as a consultant can adopt a mediation role it may be possible to equalise power. Equity is a strongly held espoused value in western culture; appeals to fairness may therefore have some effect.

In the absence of a mediator the less-powerful party can increase the costs to the other party of using their power. It is at this point that the short term strategies become important. They can be used to alter the perceptions of the more powerful party, and persuade them that dialectical processes are worth considering.

The preceding discussion may have suggested that either appeasement or confrontation may be used. When you reflect on the grid, however, it is clear that collaboration is supposed to be high on both. Soft consensus can be used when this is easily achieved. Dialectical processes are likely to be appropriate when agreement won't be so easily won.

Dialectical processes are even less common in western culture and soft consensual processes. It may therefore be useful for us to describe their style in more detail.

In essence, one must make a distinction between people and their behaviour. The issue of their undesired behaviour can then be addressed assertively. In other ways every respect can be given to them as people. If this can go beyond respect to affection, so much the better. The intention is to make it easy for people to provide direct and specific information to others, and in a way which shows a deep concern for those others.

The communication approach described in Learning to communicate is a specific example of how this may be done. This and similar approaches offer the further advantage that they can be maintained throughout the interaction instead of merely being used as short term strategies.

Figure 26 provides a summary of the relationship between the different processes and the types of situation they fit, related to the conflict grid.

Win/win
Soft consensual
processes may work

Win/lose and lose/win
Adversarial process are
most often used

Dialectical approaches
may be required. They
combine being consid-
erate to the person while
confronting the issues

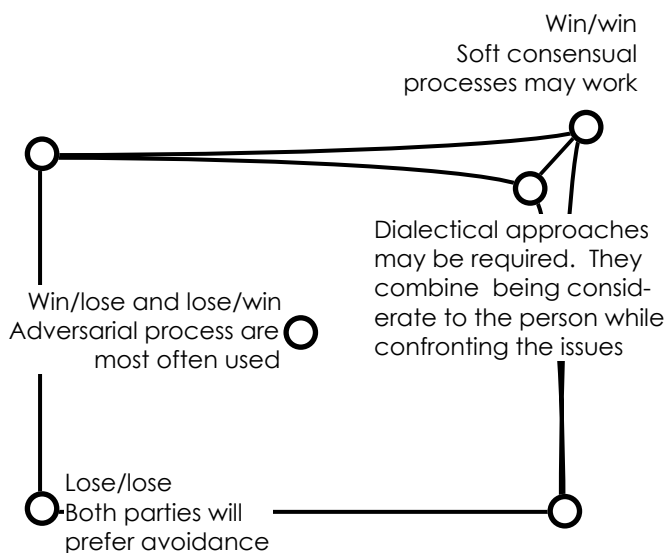Lose/lose
Both parties will
prefer avoidance

Fig. 26

Types of conflict related to the
conflict grid

■ Cultural interventions

We now come to what is probably the most difficult part of this paper. Over the last few years we have become aware that many descriptions of so-called cultural change in organisations are little more than changes at the surface levels. The literature is replete with case studies and success stories of such supposed cultural change. However, a close examination reveals that the changes wrought are often little more than superficial behavioural changes. They leave much of the deep and complex corporate phenomenon untouched.

In fact, many of them are likely to have stabilised deep and long-term cultural patterns in a group, rather than bring about change. People often contrive to adjust their behaviour in ways which are consistent with their underlying values.

The same is true of much of the literature on bringing about change. It may produce merely surface change, even in some instances where it is difficult to implement.

Among the exceptions to such descriptions we identify two in particular: the work of Schein (1985) and Lundberg (1985). They bring some clarity to issues which we have been trying to give expression to for some time.

These two authors differ in one important respect. Schein attempts to describe ten major mechanisms that can be used for bringing about organisational cultural change. Lundberg more economically attempts to build a grid . He codifies

current attempts to bring about such change at each of the four levels (in his terminology) of artifacts, perspectives, values and basic assumptions.

We suspect that Schein's formulation is an early one. We look forward in later formulations to the elegance and parsimony that we have come to expect in his models.

Nevertheless, Schein's models for cultural change do cover a wide range of possibilities. His descriptions indicate that the ten mechanisms are intended for total organisations. Our suspicion is that they will work better with small and cohesive organisations. Better still, we envisage their successful use with smaller sub-groups: a modest start within a sub-culture may over time be expanded out to include the total organisation.

The ten mechanisms Schein describes are as follows.

1 *Natural evolution*. This change of culture evolves over time by assimilating what works best. Many organisations and other social systems adjust their behaviour to fit in with demands from their environment. They may do this in such a way that their underlying culture also changes in an appropriate manner.

2 *Self-guided evolution through organisation therapy*. This unfreezes the organisation, provides psychological safety, and helps to soften the defensive nature of underlying basic assumptions. It reflects back to members of the organisation how the culture seems to be operating, and helps the processes of cognitive redefinition to occur.

This mechanism assumes that behavioural change follows upon cognitive redefinition. It occurs to us that making the myth visible through cultural interventions might transform Schein's first mechanism into the second. Is this what makes some organisations "excellent"?

We think that by this approach, Schein refers to those interventions which help people to redefine the meaning of the organisational existence. If so, we would add that, as we see it, all cultural interventions contain elements of

this. The models we have previously described can help to redefine meaning. This is most true of the second watershed model; it implies that the past was appropriate, but that a different future requires different approaches. Of the interventions we describe in To tame a unicorn, those using history are often intended to help people bury parts of the past with honour. The organisation may then more easily redefine its culture without guilt.

3   *Managed evolution through hybrids*. Key positions are filled with "insiders" who have grown up in the culture and are accepted by the members of the organisation. Their personal assumptions are somewhat different from the mainstream in the direction in which the system needs to move; they are therefore able to spearhead cultural change.

In effect, organisations which take this route to cultural change are supporting and promoting members of a counter-culture. This is similar, we think, to what we have called "working with the enthusiasts". The risk is that these are people who are marginal to the organisation, and therefore lack influence or credibility. It is obvious that the choice of "hybrids" is crucial.

We know of some examples where building good relationships between innovators and opinion-leaders within the organisation has worked well. The innovators, who may be marginal and lack influence, provide ideas for change. The opinion leaders, having developed trust in the innovators, spread the ideas more widely.

4   *Managed revolution through outsiders*. This is similar to the previous category, using outsiders instead of insiders. Outsiders are brought in to fill key positions within an organisation in order to create a new genre of leadership and, presumably, a new culture. It more clearly marks the intentions of the organisation, for better or worse. In other respects it is subject to the same risks as the preceding strategy.

Dexter Dunphy and Doug Stace (1988) have identified some of the conditions favouring revolution over evolution. The interested reader is referred to their paper. We have also commented on it in *From the profane to the sacred* (Dalmau and Dick, 1989).

Replacing the top management team with outsiders has been a common strategy in recent times, often accompanied by structural change. It can lead to genuine change. Often, however, the old culture defeats the new.

5   *Planned change and organisation development*. Much of organisation development is oriented towards developing relationships and defining shared goals. The interventions thus permit mutual insight in the development of commitment to superordinate system goals.

We have often used a planned change program to introduce a counter-culture into the organisation. Organisational members will often accept, as a natural part of a change program, structures or styles which they would question in a more "normal" organisational setting. When they later become accustomed to the structures or styles, they import those aspects which they have found to be effective. Our *Promoting internal consultancy* (1986b) discusses this approach.

6   *Technological seduction*. Technology is often the prime determinant of many of the features of a social system. Technology often decides structure; in turn, structure determines the nature of the tasks and the relationships within the system.

At one extreme, necessary technological innovation may bring with it, as a by-product, unavoidably new ways of doing things. In this way it may subtly and perhaps unexpectedly change entire cultures. This form of cultural change is usually initiated by pressures external to an organisation. At the other extreme, specific technologies may be introduced with the specific intention of seducing organisation members into new behaviour.

The presumption in these approaches is that new technologies require new behaviour. The behaviour in turn leads to the creation of new styles and structures, and eventually cultures. The introduction of a dramatically new technology also produces an expectation that there will be other changes. System members may therefore be more open to the possibility of consequent changes. The technological innovation creates a liminal period (Turner, 1987; see previously) in which people expect further change to occur.

7   *Change through scandal, explosion of myths.* Many of the beliefs which help to maintain culture are never questioned, even when false. Over time, therefore, unacknowledged inconsistencies arise between belief and reality. The inconsistencies can be used as points of leverage by management or change agent.

There are a number of ways in which the inconsistencies may be challenged. We have made a lot of use of approaches which apply models developed by Argyris and Schön. These function by challenging espoused theories and comparing them with the theories-in-use exhibited by organisation members.

Schein also has in mind the use of scandal (deliberately or unintentionally) to bring about changes which in turn will lead to changes in culture. Fallen idols may bring their culture tumbling down with them.

8   *Incrementalism.* Patient, consistent and deliberate change is used in a single direction in small amounts over a long period of time.

We suspect that, whatever approach is used, this is a valuable addition. Most of the behaviour within an organisation tends to reinforce existing cultures. It is incremental improvement, we think, which offers the least challenge to the core culture of an organisation. It can often "bed in" a new culture, however it is initiated, without arousing strong resistance.

9   *Coercive persuasion.* Old assumptions are challenged in such a way that it is difficult for people to sustain them. At the same time managers consistently provide psychological support to people, and reward any evidence of movement by members of the organisation in the desired direction.

This has been a common recent approach. By its nature it tends to produce dramatic successes (which are widely reported) and dramatic failures (which are not). We perceive, with some disquiet, a move by senior management to control the fragmentation of organisations by taking a more controlling role.

There are several contingencies which might usefully influence choice of this option. They are described well by Dunphy and Stace (1988).

10 *Turnaround*. This is a combination of many mechanisms fashioned into a single program by a talented manager or team of change agents.

In general, it is our view that multiple approaches to cultural change are most likely to be effective. You might think of it in terms of a lead strategy, perhaps chosen from one of Schein's ten mechanisms, and as many other strategies as it takes to implement the change.

You might regard these ten classes of mechanisms as a shopping list of categories. By appropriate choice, one can design more specific interventions for the organisation in question. Schein also describes how he believes some types of interventions are more suited than others to different stages of organisational cultural development through time.

Lundberg's approach is conceptually more ambitious. He attempts a description of various types of interventions to bring about cultural change at each of the four levels of artifacts, perspectives, values and assumptions (Table 3). His work is particularly interesting because he divides the use of such interventions into three different stages for each of the four levels. He calls these stages inducement planning, management planning and stabilisation planning. From his writing, these three stages seem to link very closely to Lewin's three stages of change: unfreezing, reframing and refreezing.

Table 3: Lundberg's matric of cultural interventions

	Artifacts	Perspectives	Values	Basic assumptions
Unfreezing				
Reframing				
Refreezing				

He also makes a strong case that any intervention, at any stage, must span across all four levels of artifacts, perspectives, values and basic assumptions. We agree.

This is in line with our previous application of the life-cycle model of cultural change, for instance Dalmau and Dick (1986a).

Furthermore, all interventions must be consistent with one another.

However, Lundberg also points out that he knows of no interventions in the reframing or refreezing stages, and directed towards basic assumptions, that have worked over time. If he is right and such interventions do not yet exist, then their development represents an important challenge. It is, perhaps, the most important challenge in the near future for all interested in organisational change and, dare we say, societal change.

We are less pessimistic. We regard unfreezing and refreezing as integral parts of effective change processes. In our view they don't necessarily require separate activities.

In any event, we wouldn't expect interventions for unfreezing to be sustained in time. That is not their purpose. Rather, it is to induce a temporary "liminal period" (Turner, 1987) where existing cultures are more willingly abandoned. Within such periods, people are open to a change in the meaning they attribute to their collective existence. Cultural meanings becomes negotiable meanings, setting the scene for cultural change.

Refreezing, perhaps better called consolidation, arises when the four levels are sufficiently well addressed and integrated in the change program. If all four levels are not integrated, then each risks being undermined my the others. If they are part of a consistent whole, however, we would expect them to be self-reinforcing.

Perhaps it is easier to rebuild a new organisation from scratch than it is to change the deepest levels of its culture. Certainly, in a number of Australian industries, various colleagues and acquaintances of ours believe that "greenfield sites" are more promising for innovations than existing sites.

In a different context, William James made a similar point in *The varieties of religious experience*. Written many decades ago, it argued that individuals almost never adopt different philosophical beliefs of any depth. It rarely occurs except when their old beliefs are first so completely destroyed that they have to be abandoned. In any event, this is the importance of Turner's liminal period, for it produces the willingness to consider other ways of accomplishing the organisation's purposes.

A further hope is held out for the blank spaces in Lundberg's matrix. As Gagliardi points out (p120) it is

> "of crucial importance to establish whether culture does in fact change when experience indicates its basic assumptions are no longer workable and problems of external adaptation and internal integration remain unsolved".

We have already suggested that change requires both that the present position is unsatisfactory, and that an alternative is available.

In this regard, Schein distinguishes between problem-solving efforts and anxiety-avoidance efforts. Problem-solving efforts, obviously enough, are directed towards identifying and resolving the presenting problems. Anxiety-avoidance efforts are aimed at removing a sense of threat, so maintaining the stability of deep-seated basic assumptions.

In the case of problem-solving efforts, Schein views are reminiscent of those of James. He suggests that an organisation will abandon its present behaviour and look for new alternatives when the response is clearly no longer valid. Anxiety-avoidance strategies, he suggests, are learned and deeply imbedded in an organisation. As they enable it to reduce anxiety they are likely to have been repeated indefinitely.

The two types of situations are closely intertwined. Schein goes on to suggest, however, that anxiety-avoidance is often an important part of a social system's

response to a challenge. When this is so, one must find the deep-seated source of anxiety and ensure it no longer exists. This is obviously a very hard road to hoe.

Gagliardi (p120) makes a salient and related point. Most responses of an organisation have two roles. They may be formulated to solve problems. At the same time, they are intended to reduce the anxiety and uncertainty that unsolved problems create.

These ideas suggest to us something important about cultural change. To handle it more constructively, we would suggest, give sufficient attention to the interpersonal and intrapersonal levels of organisational life. It is at these levels that the anxiety most often arises, and is often most constructively confronted.

The conflict grid, which we used to explain some overall approaches, is an interpersonal model. The greater the extent to which win-win resolutions can be incorporated in change, the fewer the interpersonal sources of anxiety. To this end, we view as very important the development of what we have called dialectic approaches. Cultural changes most often have political implications which soft consensus may not be able to handle. It therefore becomes useful to have processes which can generate agreement out of disagreement.

For within-person sources of anxiety, we agree with Schein's distinction between problem-solving and anxiety-avoidance. It corresponds with our problem-solving/anxiety-solving dichotomy, developed for one-to-one communication skills development (Dick, 1986). It is illustrated in Figure 24. The primacy of emotions and beliefs, and their importance to the deeper cultural levels of the life-cycle model, are discussed in the Seminar '83 paper (Dalmau, 1983).

Culture is a collective phenomena. But, as suggested by the second watershed, it can be regarded as carried by the belief-feeling complexes of individuals. Only by addressing it both collectively and individually can it be managed with much hope of success.

threat to
comfort

arousal

excitement

*confidence,
competence*

anxiety

problem-
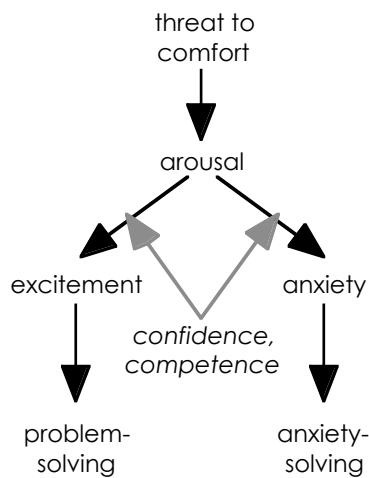solving

anxiety-
solving

Fig. 24

Problem-solving and
anxiety solving:
A threat (such as that brought about by an impending change) produces arousal as readiness for action. If this is accompanied by a sense of competence and confidence the arousal is used to engage with the situation and work towards a constructive outcome. Otherwise the arousal is expended in the anxiety-solving behaviours of fight and flight.

(After Dick, 1986)

Some specific strategies
for cultural change

We offer now some more specific suggestions which attempt to draw upon much of the earlier material. This occurs in two parts.

Immediately below we discuss some approaches to those changes which address conflict between groups, or changes in political style. For reasons mentioned earlier, these are instances of cultural change. The cultural component, however, applies mainly because intergroup and political changes are inevitably to do with culture.

We then briefly address changes which are deliberately directed towards culture.

In both of the sections following, we focus on some part of the change process. We ask you to remember, though, that we assume change is most effective when all levels are addressed simultaneously, and in a coherent fashion.

Conflict management and political interventions

In almost all situations of apparent conflict it is worth beginning by assuming that agreement is possible. Consensual processes can then be used to make the decisions.

Western culture tends to assume that situations are win/lose and that competition is beneficial. Even substantial amounts of surface disagreement can therefore conceal considerable agreement. In many settings it is so common for disagreement to be expressed that the agreement often passes unnoticed. Giving it an opportunity to emerge is often all that is needed.

If you think this is so, there are three major alternatives for increasing the likelihood that the agreement will emerge. We have described some of the relevant techniques and issues in a number of places (e.g. Dick, 1987).

■ Agree first on a process. Check to make sure that all of those involved are sufficiently comfortable with the process to give commitment to any decisions it produces.

■ Alternatively, first use some goal-setting process to determine superordinate goals. Then, working within the constraints suggested by that, use goal setting to decide group and intergroup goals.

■ As a third alternative, first use some technique such as search or a dream trip (see Dick and Dalmau, 1989) to agree on future ideals. Then use these as the framework within which more specific goals are set.

These are not mutually exclusive. The first of them is usually appropriate. Very often, all three can be used together.

It is worth mentioning that consensual processes work best when two conditions are met. Firstly, it helps when the common ways of doing things are congruent with underlying values and culture. Secondly, success is assisted when the cultures of the various groups involved are not substantially different.

We have found, sometimes by bitter experience, that relationships are important. Putting effort into team building and climate setting will improve the likelihood of success. The greater the disagreement we expect, the more effort we direct towards team building.

From time to time we anticipate a particularly difficult interaction. We then invest as much effort in team building through self-disclosure as we think the people will tolerate with reasonable comfort. We also do this in a way which is as affirming of people as possible. In other words, we take pains to address both intrapersonal and interpersonal issues.

A more common case is where disagreement is real and substantial, or at least concerns substantial issues. As our earlier discussion of the conflict grid suggests, it is then likely that compromise will suit some people while others will prefer avoidance. This is an indication that it is perceived as a win/lose situation.

One may then first direct short-term attention both to building relationships and clarifying issues. Following this, dialectical processes can be used to turn some of the disagreement into agreement.

In a sense, well-managed face-to-face dialectical processes combine some of the features of both accommodation and competition on the conflict grid. On the one hand, you want people to speak clearly to the issues, and not pussyfoot around. On the other hand, this may have destructive effects unless people demonstrate some willingness to understand other views, and to seek actively for a best-of-both-worlds compromise.

There is some support for this point of view in the literature on communication skills in one-to-one situations. Ellis and Whitington (1983) label it "empathetic assertion"; Woolfolk and Dever (1979) use the term "assertion plus extra communication". According to them, observers rate it as effective as assertion,

and at the same time less hostile. It has been recommended for assertion in a work context, for example by Argyle, Furnham and Graham (1981).

A typical dialectical process is cyclic, so that there is time for information to be exchanged and for agreement to increase. Here is an example, modified and condensed from *Helping groups to be effective* (Dick, 1987, p132).

1   Each person works individually to formulate her position. People then gather in like group to prepare a statement of their combined position. The parts of their position are arranged in order of priority. Each group chooses a spokesperson and briefs her on the position she is to describe.

2   A summary of the group's position is prepared on newsprint.

3   The groups meet. Each spokesperson in turn describes her group's position. Beyond the first cycle of the procedure, she also gives the information which explains her group's position on those point where it has not moved towards agreement. People are urged to inform rather than persuade.

4   During the exchange the other participants are given the task of identifying those matters on which the groups agree. Where there is strong disagreement the other participants try to formulate a position mid-way between the two presentations.

5   Each group then revises its position. Groups may either move on any issue towards the midpoint or point of agreement, or they may provide detailed information which helps to explain why they hold the position they do.

6   The procedure then recycles back to step 2 until agreement is reached or it is decided that agreement is impossible.

This requires a skilled facilitator. For less experienced people the communication may be written rather than spoken. (Even when it is spoken a written record to speak to is recommended.)

The effect of dialectical approaches is to identify and surface that information which is most relevant to explaining the various positions. As deeper issues and

more personal information becomes obviously relevant it is added to the information exchanged.

Any intergroup issues involving conflict and politics will probably also profit by being strengthened by some of the strategies suggested below.

Addressing cultural issues more directly

Following what we said earlier about the relative permanence of culture, we describe here the changing of culture by creating or supporting a sub-culture. In other words, we present techniques intended for use with systems or parts of a system so that you can work with all system members at once.

(If you are attempting something more ambitious than this, we suggest a more careful process. For example you might form a working group within the system and involve them in detailed planning. At the same time we suggest that you remain prepared to change your mind often in the light of developments.)

At different times we have used one or other of the following approaches to identify a likely counter-culture. You may also find the agricultural extension model useful here — see Dalmau and Dick (1986b).

- Identify an existing and potentially influential counter-culture. This is akin to what we have on occasion described as working with the enthusiasts. You might do this, for example, by finding the "young turks" within an organisation. It may be very important to secure approval in principle, or better still, full involvement, from the very top of the system.

- Use some change program to set up what amounts to a counter-culture within the program itself. For example, work with a small group to introduce some change. Introduce, but only within the change program, more participative and egalitarian ways of making decisions and implementing them. Studiously avoid any pressure on people to export the different methods into their day-to-day behaviour outside the change program; pressure may produce only resistance.

This tends to work better when there is an acknowledged need for change, as our earlier discussion implied. Technological change may sometimes serve as the catalyst. Developing new products or services to take advantage of new markets may also be appropriate.

One way of introducing different ways of operating is through the development of groundrules. Three which we have used are ...

1   Participation: Anyone affected by a goal or how it is achieved is involved in the goal setting and action planning.

2   Analysis: Any action planning is postponed until the situation is sufficiently analysed and understood.

3   Common goals: Where problems are addressed they are stated as common goals, without blame or criticism or demands.

There is no reason why the two strategies should not be combined. In both, the attempt is to change behaviour which relates to the type of culture desired. In both, this is done without putting any pressure on people to conform to that behaviour — pressure generates resistance, and resistance is even more inimical to cultural change than to change generally.

Legitimising any changes is important. Sanction from the top helps here, provided there is some sense of collective identity. Gaining greater acceptance for individual differences allows individuals more room to move as they experiment with new behaviours. We have found the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or MBTI (Myers, 1962), a measure of personality according to the ideas of Carl Jung, a very self-affirming and impactful instrument in such endeavours. It has the added advantage that as a spin-off it improves relationships and teamwork, a purpose for which we have used it.

You can tell when cultural issues begin to impinge. People become upset and offer a stronger defence than their argument justifies. This indicates that you are dealing with emotional beliefs without reason. At this point it appears best to ...

- make it as acceptable as possible for people to express their emotion; they then have less need to explain their behaviour later by deciding that you were quite out of order;

- help people to dispose of some of the emotion by expressing it; and then ...

- help them to discover the reasons for their beliefs; having reasons, they are more likely to decide that new conditions and situations require new approaches.

The last of these is most important. It works only when the people genuinely uncover the reasons for themselves. Effective change agents in such settings are those who know when to keep their mouths shut. It seems so easy to help along the understanding of a person or group; but unless it is done with great sensitivity and timing, it undermines the sense of ownership of the concept. And ownership is crucial.

The other two conditions are first required to make the first condition possible. The use of a model or theory or evidence which provides a rationale may also help, but preferably only after the reasons for existing beliefs are understood. The second watershed can be used for this purpose, or the literature on organisational excellence.

In all of this, honouring the history of the organisation or group is especially important. People often expect that they are being asked to deny their past; as it is the source of their sense of identity, they can be expected to defend it vigorously.

We have used two history-based strategies, one collective and one interpersonal, to some effect. Each of them seems to bring about change to some extent at all levels.

One is the use of a history trip which is described elsewhere (Dalmau, Dick and Boas, 1989; Dick and Dalmau, 1989). In it, people use story to recollect their past, and to reflect upon its past and present meaning for them.

The second is a personal equivalent of the history trip. It is an exercise which we have developed over the last four years titled Person-sharing (Dalmau, 1989; Dick and Dalmau, 1989). This exercise is designed to have individuals, initially in pairs, share their personal mythology with one another. Again, story is used as the vehicle.

These two techniques go together very well. Each invites people to identify important transitions in their life (collective life in one instance, individual in the other). Each encourages disclosure about specific and understandable material, but which relates to the deeper levels of individual and group existence.

In both cases, changes result from the shared experience of doing these exercises. The changes seems to be so valent for the individuals concerned that they become part of the culture-determining forces within the group, and reshape them of their own accord.

◼ **Finale**

We have covered a broad range in this document. Reviewing it, we acknowledge that it deserves a book rather than a monograph. Perhaps there will eventually be one. The central issues, however, are simple enough.

Underlying much of the discussion are two equations. One is that culture and politics and conflict are inevitably intertwined. The other is that culture and its structural correlates are the collective equivalent of interpersonal relationships at the pair or group level. At individual level they correspond to an amalgam of beliefs and feelings.

A further underlying assumption, often repeated, is that culture is multi-layered. The deeper levels, beyond consciousness, are the most important. They can only be expressed through the most superficial layer, as artifact or as behaviour.

Whatever level we grapple with, we observe behaviour and we change behaviour. That is all that can be done directly. How the behaviour is addressed determines the depth of influence. The direction of influence between behaviour and the deeper levels of culture is two-way. Myths (or basic assumptions) determine some behaviour. Myths are established and ultimately changed through changing behaviour.

The deeper levels are most frequently below awareness, and particularly following times of stability. They are thus difficult to study, and even more difficult to change.

This much provides the context.

We have addressed a number of models which, between them, provide some conceptual tools for considering the issues.

The life-cycle model, varied to take account of the work of some recent writers in the field, describes the multiple layers of culture. It provides a vehicle for exploring the stage of development or decline of a culture, and for understanding many cultural phenomena.

The second watershed provides an evolutionary explanation for the shifts in culture which others (such as Toffler) have described. It allows predictions to be made about some of the changes which can be expected in the near future. By providing an overarching framework, it can also serve to legitimise change by demonstrating that current cultural patterns are a selection from a wider range of options. Since the first edition of this monograph, it has some empirical support in recent research on trends in organisation and management.

The culture grid identifies some of the dimensions on which culture may vary. Its focus is upon two types of relationship which are central to issues of culture, and politics, and conflict: between individual and system, and between individual and individual. It can be extended to treat sub-cultures rather than individuals; and in that form it can be used to provide some of the specifics which the second watershed model addresses in more general terms.

We have extended the conflict grid of Thomas and Kilmann to provide a set of criteria for deciding what style of conflict management is appropriate. This model was further extended to cover inter-group as well as interpersonal conflict. Choice of process was related to it by categorising processes into three types: consensual, adversarial, and dialectical. We recommended a more deliberate combination of the two dimensions of the grid as often most suitable for dealing with difficult situations.

Finally, we have attempted to draw this together into a brief account of how political change and cultural change may be approached.

In the first edition we wrote that this document was already out of date. Writing about it changed our mind about what we had already written. That is still true, to some extent, though we have taken the opportunity of this revision to update some of our ideas. It is still often true, however, that the result of writing has more often been to raise issues than to provide definitive answers. We still believe that that is appropriate for issues which are both complex and important.

We intend to enjoy exploring these issues in the future. We wish you the same enjoyment and exploration.

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