# "Business Ethics : Exploring the Field and Contextualising its Contemporary Appeal"

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# Abstract

The research is concerned with accounting for the contemporary forms of discourse and practice of business ethics.

Through a review of the literature concerning both business ethics and organisational culture it is argued that each literature expresses the contemporary uncertainty regarding how organisational practices and management may be analyzed and understood.

A casestudy of Sheffield Business School indicates that the interest in "managing" organisational culture, along with the contemporary interest in business ethics, can be viewed as reflecting the uncertainties arising from the increased influence of the free market economy upon both business organisations and other organisational forms. It is argued that both the Business School as a cultural artifact, and the contemporary concerns with organisational culture and business ethics reflect the complexities and the uncertainties confronting individual actors living in an era characterised as one of Reflexive Modernity.

With regard to business ethics, it is contended that there is a need to locate the phenomenon within an analysis of the socio-economic milieux of Western society. A postmodernist analysis is rejected on the grounds that the concept itself can be located within a Durkheimian analysis which applies the concept of anomie. By drawing attention to the effects of the free market upon other spheres of social life, it is argued that Durkheim provides an appropriate conceptual framework for the analysis of business ethics. That is, business ethics can be viewed as being both an expression of, and reaction to, contemporary anomie. This is also reflected in controversies regarding the parameters of business ethics, and the methodological difficulties encountered in researching the phenomenon.

By providing a non-rejectionist critique of free market business behaviour, a Durkheimian analysis of business ethics provides a means of analyzing future developments within the business community and the role of the free market within society, as well as the implications for individual behaviour.

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The First International Annual Conference on Professional and Business Ethics, held at the University of Central Lancashire on the 14th and 15th October 1993 where I and my colleagues, Phil Johnson and Cathy Cassell presented a paper entitled, "The Impact of Corporate Ethical Codes Upon organisational Behaviour: Towards a Model".

The Strategic Direction of Human Resource Management Conference, held at Nottingham Trent University on the 14th and 15th December 1994, where the same authors presented a paper entitled, "Personnel/Human Resource Management, Corporate Codes of Ethics and Organisational Control".

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presented a paper entitled, "The Modern University: Postmodern or Anomic?"

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# CONTENTS


| | | Pages |
|---|---|---|
| **Introduction** | | 1 - 9 |
| **Chapter One** | Business Ethics : Investigating the Field | 10 - 44 |
| **Chapter Two** | Business Ethics and Organisational Culture : Two Expressions of Uncertainty | 45 - 79 |
| **Chapter Three** | Reflecting on Methods | 80 - 110 |
| **Chapter Four** | Researching Sheffield Business School | 111 - 134 |
| **Chapter Five** | Analysing Sheffield Business School | 135 - 170 |
| **Chapter Six** | Locating the "Field" | 171 - 196 |
| **Chapter Seven** | Review and Commentary | 197 - 207 |
| **Bibliography** | | 208 - 261 |

# Introduction

The objective of the introduction is threefold. Firstly to provide a brief account of my interest in the subject and why it was chosen. Secondly to identify the objectives of the study as they evolved during the investigation, and thirdly to explain how they are achieved within the context of the structure of the thesis.

## Accounting for the Topic

Like perhaps the vast majority of research undertaken at this level the actual process by which the work has evolved and development cannot be described as reflecting order; rationality; the systematic planning and carrying out of activities. Whatever the initial effort involved in identifying promising avenues of research, and exploring the existing literature for ideas, the actual process is inevitably one of uncertainty, change, and discovery.

The six years of study involved in the presentation of the present work reflect considerable personal, social, and intellectual upheaval. Not only has the original specification of the work changed considerably - reflecting the inevitable learning process accompanying any such research activity - but concomitant with this process there has been ongoing changes within the work environment, reflecting the changing nature of higher educational provision within Britain.

The personal implications arising from the interrelationships existing between these two developments have been critical in a number of ways for both the development and content of the research. The intensification of work activity, resulting from changes in both the financing and structuring of higher educational provision, and the development of a more "market-oriented" approach to its provision, have inevitably resulted in increased pressure in terms of teaching; student numbers; and an increased concern with "identifiable outputs" from staff. The subsequent necessary additional commitment of time and personal resources has inevitably resulted in there being less resource available for part-time research. Amidst the negative aspects of change however, there is also a positive element that can be discerned, if only with the benefit of reflective hindsight. In a number of ways, the increasing pressures of the work environment unintentionally facilitated and encouraged changes in the way in which the research proceeded.

In some respects, it can also be argued that they provided, or provoked, a significant change in the focus of the research, not just in terms of the Business School becoming the basis for the empirical part of the research, but also because they prompted a change in the intellectual, and theoretical framing of the research activity. While it is possible to contend that, initially, some of the more macro-theoretical aspects of the research were there at an early stage of the actual research activity, at least in a partial and semi-implicit sense, the way in which they evolved and developed, and came to take on a greater prominence within the overall research product, was not initially entirely foreseen. In this respect, the interplay between the activity of research, and the changing work context within

which I have been located during the past six years, has had the effect of contributing to the final product.

The negative consequence of such changes to my work environment became uncomfortably apparent to me during the autumn of 1994 when I became ill with stress. The four months off work which ensued, followed by a halting return to employment necessitated the research being put in to "limbo" for some considerable time. Initially, suspending the research for five months with the intention of recommencing it in the summer of 1995, it became increasingly apparent to me that my rehabilitation was taking much longer than expected. After what can only be described as a thoroughly uncomfortable academic year 1995-96, during which time I came perilously close to succumbing to a recurrence of stress, it is only now, in the autumn of 1996 that I have felt able to recommence my studies.

If there was a "good" side to it was that the latter period of my recuperation provided time to reflect more broadly on the nature of my studies and helped to impose some order on what had hitherto been somewhat disjointed activities as indicated below.

Inevitably, with any part-time research activity which has continued over a number of years, the actual "products" or outputs, in terms of draft chapters, is an intermittent process reflecting both the demands of the job and the ability and opportunity to create "space" and time for the activity of writing. As a result, the "threads of thought" between the initial production of the chapters is sometimes quite tenuous. This reflects both the "piecemeal" and intermittent process of the research itself, and also the incremental way in which one's thoughts on the subject are simultaneously modified and developed. The iterative process which is an inevitable component of part-time research, can be both at once a source of personal anxiety and insecurity, while simultaneously provoking a sense of excitement, anticipation, and discovery.

The actual process by which my thoughts developed and eventually took on a more concrete form and intellectual shape would seem to be a cunning blend of both conscious thought and reflection, and semi-, or unconscious processes by which ideas, half-thoughts, and conjectures, come to gradual fruition within the charnel house of the mind. The eventual "moment of insight" when an idea is crystallized in conscious, articulate thought, is sometimes simply the end-product of a much more tenuous process of maturation within the complexities of the mind. For example, one of my more important insights "hit" me one day outside Coles in the middle of Sheffield when I was not even consciously thinking about my work.

When I began the present research activity, having just completed the registering for the MPhil with the opportunity to transfer to Phd, my chief supervisor remarked that one of the unforeseen effects of undertaking such activity was that one "really gets to know oneself". At the time I did not consciously pay the comment very much importance, but six years on, I now have a much greater appreciation, and understanding of what the comment entails. During the course of the research I

have, like I suspect many research students before me, questioned myself regarding my motives and objectives in undertaking such an, at times, daunting task. It is in this respect that the activity can be uncomfortably intrusive and thought-provoking regarding one's self-assumptions concerning one's knowledge and understanding of both theory and concepts, and of one's own feelings and motives.

In terms of why the research topic - business ethics - was actually chosen, it gradually became apparent to me that at least part of the reason lay in my own mixed attitudes towards business. In this respect therefore, the nature of the topic, and probably also the way in which the research evolved in terms of its overall theoretical perspective, reflects a deeply personal aspect of my own being, and understanding of the social world. It reflects a personal concern to explore complex areas of thought and knowledge which are becoming of increasing importance socially, but which also reflects a personal desire to explore and develop my own thoughts regarding the role and nature of business practice within society and my attitudes and feelings towards this.

On a purely personal level of analysis, the starting point, for me, begins back in 1971, when as a final year sociology student at Stirling University, I was confronted with the need to think about my future work and career. For me, at that time, the question was ostensibly a simple one: do I seek a career in business or commerce, or stay in education and try to become an academic. It would be absurd to contend that I can recall in any detail the precise nature of my thoughts regarding how I resolved this issue. What I do recall however, was that my decision to stay in education, was based primarily upon a concern for what I felt a working life in business did to people. Based probably on nothing much more than an intuitive, "gut feeling", and no doubt a considerable degree of ignorance regarding the nature of academia, I rejected the world of business for the world of books, lectures, and assignments. Perhaps part of my increasing disillusionment with academia is due, in part, to the increasing intrusion of business and commercial aspects into the academic sphere?

Somewhat paradoxically perhaps, I have spent most of the intervening twenty-four years teaching about business. Over the years the label by which I have been identified has changed somewhat as a result of both educational politics and consumer fashion. Beginning initially as an industrial sociologist, I have since practised my trade under such headings as: organisational sociologist; a behaviourial accountant; a behaviourial scientist; and more recently either a lecturer in organisational behaviour, or human resource management. While the books and articles may have changed somewhat in focus and content over the years, the common thread linking them all has been a concern for the effects of business and the economy upon both society and the individual. In one important respect therefore, one could argue that the present research into the nature of business ethics has been part of a hidden agenda for me for quite some time.

If however, this is true for me as an individual, it is also true at the level of formal academic discourse and research activity. The fact that business ethics as an area

of acceptable academic activity has only recently begun to be accepted within British academic circles is itself worth consideration, and something which the following work seeks to account for.

During the course of the present work, I found that my personal research interests have both evolved and modified, reflecting a personal process of self-reflection regarding the nature of the social phenomenon of business ethics. This process of personal and intellectual development is reflected in the way in which the actual research activity was undertaken, and is inherent in the very structure of the work that is presented in the following pages. It has been, to use acceptable terminology, an "iterative process" - a phrase which encapsulates a considerable degree of doubt and uncertainty; reconsideration; change of focus; and re-evaluation of earlier thoughts and conceptualisations. In this respect, it is also an ongoing process.

On the very point of submitting the research for judgement, I am only too aware of the present paradoxical situation in which I find myself. On the one hand, I am aware of how much my own personal knowledge and understanding has developed during the course of undertaking the present work. On the other hand, however, I am also more aware of the breadth and depth of my own ignorance. It has been suggested that a little learning can be a dangerous thing. This may well be true, but it can also serve as an appealing appetizer by whetting the appetite for more. In this last respect, the conclusion and presentation of the current work has also provoked a desire to explore the area further. Now, however, I am in a much better position to know how this might be undertaken in a constructive and informative fashion.

**The Objectives of the Study**

Like, I suspect many Phd theses, the objectives of the present work have been developed and modified during the course of the investigation. As the work progressed it became apparent that there were a number of inter-related objectives which I was seeking to both clarify in my own mind, and provide an overall theoretical explanation for.

In terms of there being one overriding objective it could be said to be:

> to provide an explanation for the articulation of business ethics as a social product of both knowledge and practice which provides a means of accounting for both its current forms of expression and the attendant controversies surrounding it as an increasingly important phenomenon of both academic discourse and practical application.

In more practical terms, this can be broken down into a number of inter-related, and somewhat more specific objectives which formed the ongoing basis for the research:

1. To clarify the form and content of business ethics as an area of academic study.

2. To identify the differing approaches to the study and practice of business ethics, and the increasing importance of "contextualist" accounts as opposed to normative and prescriptive approaches to the subject.

3. To explore the contemporary relationship between business ethics and organisational culture, both in terms of their temporal convergence, and their similarities as academic areas of study. The contention is that both phenomena reflect the increasing complexity of the social world and the concerns and anxieties of the business community.

4. To account for the increasing importance of business ethics as a subject of academic study and the complexity of the phenomenon and provide a theoretical explanation for this.

5. To reflect upon the contemporary and future role of business ethics within both academia and business, and identify future areas for research and investigation.

**The Rationale for the Format and Structure of the Thesis**

What follows is a brief synopsis and rationale for the individual chapters which constitute the thesis, and an explanation of their relationship to each other. This latter point is important as the subject matter of the individual chapters reflects the iterative thought processes by which the research was undertaken and the somewhat disordered way in which the focus of the thesis evolved.

Chapter One is concerned with providing a brief history and overview of business ethics and its evolution. The objective is to:

A. Account for the wide variety of definitions for the subject.

B. Indicate its evolution, primarily within an Anglo-American context.

C. Identify both the variety of academic disciplines which contribute to the "field" of business ethics and the manner in which approaches to the subject have changed over time.

D. Elaborate on the increasing popularity of descriptive or contextualist approaches to the subject as opposed to the more traditional normative or prescriptive

approaches, indicating the problems which this poses for research.

In conceptualizing business ethics as an essentially twentieth century phenomenon, the way in which the subject has evolved reflects both changes in the nature of the business activity and the socio-cultural environment within which it is situated. The greater public concern with the increasing complexity and consequences of business activities is reflected in the changing focus and content of business ethics.

This contextualisation of business ethics as a social phenomenon is also reflected academically by the increased concern to give more prominence to the need to understand the way in which individual business practitioners and organisational actors make sense of and evaluate their particular work situations. The concern is to understand the contextual factors which may influence the ethicality, or otherwise, of their behaviour.

It is in this respect that the contextualist approach to business ethics can be viewed as evolving concomitantly with the increased interest with organisational culture during the nineteen eighties, and which forms the focus for the second chapter. Chapter Two is concerned with exploring the inter-relationships between the study of business ethics and organisational culture as two relatively distinct, but arguably complimentary, areas of academic study.

A number of similarities are identified:

A. Both identify various "levels of analysis" within their respective areas of investigation.

B. Both subject areas identify a number of different theoretical approaches to their respective areas of knowledge. In this respect, both areas acknowledge the limitations of discrete, discipline-based approaches to their investigation.

C. Both pose methodological challenges to researchers which themselves indicate contemporary uncertainties regarding the conduct of academic research.

In addition, it is argued that both subject areas also reflect wider socio-cultural and business concerns regarding the contemporary nature of society and business practice.

Both organisational culture, and approaches to culture management reflect a concern to both acknowledge and control the behaviour, attitudes, and values of organisational members. Similarly, various forms of applied business ethics, such as the concern with the development of corporate codes of ethics and conduct; whistleblowing; and ethics training can be used as means of modifying and

regulating employee behaviour. It is argued that such similarity reflects the contemporary concern within business to develop and extend traditional mechanisms of management control in response to the increasingly complex demands of the business environment for both organisational flexibility and individual creativity, and increased organisational efficiency and employee commitment.

Chapter Three is concerned with developing a rationale and justification for the empirical research which is dealt with in Chapters Four and Five. Initially the concern is to identify the various methodological problems, and approaches to undertaking business ethics research. The difficulties in both identifying "ethical issues" as perceived by respondents is identified, and approaches to identifying respondents' ethical beliefs is highlighted.

Both ethnographic and a case-study approach are considered as methods of both accessing and interpreting respondents ethical beliefs, and identifying their strengths and weaknesses. The use of a case-study approach is adopted on the grounds that it provides a means of contextualising an investigation of the cultural milieux within which respondents identify ethical issues relating to their everyday working environment. In addition, by locating the study within an analysis of the changing environment within which the focal organisation - Sheffield Business School - is located, the study recognizes the importance of contextualising the investigation of both organisational culture and business ethics within a systemic level of analysis.
Within the context of the overall thesis, the case study of Sheffield Business School should be viewed as fulfilling two main functions. Firstly it provides an example of the methodological issues confronted in adopting a contextualist approach to the study of business ethics as identified above. Secondly however, within the iterative process within which the thesis evolved the case-study provided an important mechanism for both self-reflection and theorizing. In this respect, the undertaking of the case-study prompted a process of both theory testing and theory building which provided an important, if unexpected, development to the overall thesis.

Chapter Four is concerned with recounting the process by which Sheffield Business School was chosen as the subject of the case-study. Although not initially the preferred choice, failure to gain entry to the initial site and the subsequent loss of time, resulted in the decision to undertake the research within one's own place of work. This chapter recounts the processes by which respondents were approached and invited to participate and the mechanisms by which the empirical research was undertaken; respondents sub-divided into groups for purposes of comparison; and the interview data transcribed, and categorized prior to analysis.

Chapter Five provides an analysis of the research data. It provides a contextual analysis of the changing work environment within which the respondents' identification of ethical concerns is explained in terms of both the past history and ongoing political processes within the School. In addition, the need to locate the analysis of respondents' views within a systemic analysis of the changing context of tertiary education is acknowledged. While such an approach necessarily

influences the process by which respondents' views and opinions are recorded and analyzed, it does have the advantage of providing a macro-framework within which to locate the concerns which are identified.

The latter part of this chapter therefore provides a contrasting contextual analysis of Sheffield Business School in terms of two differing theoretical analyses - postmodern versus anomic. The objective here is to identify the case-study of the Business School as a microcosm of broader socio-cultural developments.

It is contended that the changing work environment of Sheffield Business School is culturally symbolic of broader changes taking place within British society. The increasing penetration of the market economy as a means of both affecting, and regulating, changes within higher education are characteristic of the process of "New Public Management" which expresses the means by which the workings of the free market economy have been extended into previously non-market spheres of activity. Such developments have important consequences for both the activities in question, in this case higher education, and in accounting for the increased interest in business ethics as a social phenomenon.

Chapter Six provides a theoretical analysis of business ethics as a contemporary cultural and social phenomenon. Making use of the Durkheimian concept of "anomie" it is argued that business ethics can be seen as both an expression of, and reaction to, contemporary anomie.

Durkheim's concern with the increasing extension of market relationships into other spheres of social activity, and the difficulties of a transition from mechanistic to organic forms of solidarity are increasingly relevant to contemporary social and political concerns. The contemporary problems arising from the increased pace of socio-cultural and economic change, and the increasing uncertainty arising from concerns regarding the future of work and employment; the inevitability and desirability of economic growth and progress; the increasing pervasiveness and dependence upon information technology; the effects of an increasingly global economy upon both lifestyles and beliefs, all serve to generate increasing levels of individual doubt and uncertainty concerning: acceptable modes and standards of behaviour; realistic expectations and aspirations; and acceptable lifestyle. At a societal level of analysis, such concerns find expression in the fear of a decline in community and the over-emphasis of individualism. While such choice and variety can be accounted for as expressions of postmodern lifestyles, it is contended that an analysis in terms of contemporary anomie is equally, if not more valid.

Viewing business ethics as both a reaction to, and expression of contemporary anomie provides a means of accounting for the apparently contradictory aspects of the phenomenon. On the one hand, business ethics can be viewed as expressing a concern for principles and standards; codes of behaviour; and criteria for determining what is "good" and "bad" behaviour within the context of the business environment and business organisations. As such it is expresses a concern for order, stability, and control.

Alternatively, when one locates the study of business ethics as a product of social knowledge and practice, it becomes apparent that in an era of reflexive modernity any such standards, rules, and prescriptions, have all become problematic and open to question. In this respect, the very phenomenon of business ethics can be seen as an expression of contemporary uncertainty. Rather than providing a safe haven, a body of sure and certain knowledge, it is itself an area of debate, dispute, and contestation. Within the prevailing business ethics literature this is illustrated by the controversy surrounding such concepts as: business as a game; the moral status of the corporation; and whistleblowing. In the broader theoretical context the concern with the phenomenon of "postmodern ethics" expresses similar uncertainty.

Chapter Seven has two objectives. Firstly, it provides a brief summary of the preceding chapters, indicating how the thesis evolved into its present form and what has been achieved. Secondly, it considers the future role of business ethics within both academia and business. It is argued that within an academic context it provides an area of transdisciplinarity. As a multidisciplinary area of investigation it challenges the traditional disciplinary construction and division of knowledge. This means that it will be both an area of academic contestation, and a focus for intellectual and academic development.

In the context of the free market and business practice it is argued that it provides a potentially powerful mechanism for both reflecting upon and perhaps modifying contemporary business practices in the light of critical commentary at the level of individual organisational practice. At the systemic level of analysis, it provides a potentially powerful mechanism for the internal modification of the free market system. However, it must also be borne in mind that, as a socially determined product, business ethics may also be prone to redefinition and regulation resulting in what Pastin (1988) refers to as "Agreement-Racket-Ethics" whereby it is used as a mechanism of both reinforcing and re-legitimating the free-market mechanism.

# Chapter One
# Business Ethics: Investigating the Field

## Introduction

This opening chapter is concerned to indicate the historical development of business ethics as an academic area of investigation. In identifying how the approach to the subject has shifted from a predominantly philosophical and religious focus towards a more social/psychological one, it indicates the need to contextualise the changing nature of business ethics within an analysis of the broader political-economic and socio-cultural changes within society.

The contradictions and ambiguities inherent in business ethics are succinctly expressed in the charge that business ethics is an oxymoron. The challenge is to not simply to counter the charge but also to account for why the charge is so often made. By indicating both the way in which business ethics has developed, and the importance of locating such changes within a broader framework of analysis one can begin the process of clarifying both the subject matter itself and the socio-cultural and political-economic context within which it is located. In a period of both apparently continual technological and socio-cultural change, the role of both business organisations and business management has come under increased scrutiny.

If belief in the overall benefits and superiority of the free market system during this century has predominated in Western society, the workings of the market have not been without criticism. The pace, extent, and mechanisms of both structural and organisational change undertaken in Western societies during the last quarter of a century has prompted questions concerning the need to regulate the workings of the free market in order to lessen the severity of changes to work and employment, and to regulate the relative autonomy of employers and managers. At a time when governments on both sides of the Atlantic have advocated a reduced role for government in the running of the economy, the role of the business leader and manager has become simultaneously more important and more prone to scrutiny and censure. But if the business community is to be granted more autonomy, and less reliance placed upon the law and other external forms of regulation, there needs to be some form of self-regulation which is both socially acceptable and amenable to scrutiny, evaluation, and modification where necessary. Business ethics, in its various forms and expressions has sought to fill that role during the course of this century.

While both the focus of concerns and the methods of application have varied in response to changing demands of both the business community and public concern, one reason why the concept has endured is that it provides a means by which both the activity and criteria of business behaviour becomes less opaque. The choice of the term "opaque" is a

deliberate one in that it draws attention to the fact that any such mechanism of scrutiny is at best partial, providing both an intellectual and ideological filter through which the objectives and activities of business organisations can be perceived, interpreted, and evaluated. Business ethics is a conceptual prism by which business behaviour becomes partially visible and amenable to evaluation. The construction of the prism is a socially-mediated construction of knowledge and practice reflecting the differing interests of business, consumers, government, academics, and public, and their ability to influence both the parameters and content of the subject area. It is not surprising therefore that business ethics is problematic, both in terms of its areas of study, and the intellectual and practical methods by which it is both investigated and applied. In a very real sense, it is a contingent product of its time and location - an important by-product of the process of industrialization and the predominance of the market economy in Western societies.

In a period of rapid and uncertain change in both the structure and composition of business and society the role of business ethics has become both more important and more visible. It is also, however, equally important to ask: what is business ethics? How has it changed and evolved over the years? How can one understand the changing nature of its form and content, and the role which it plays in contemporary society? This chapter is concerned to provide a start to such an analysis.

A traditional starting point for many academic investigations into a particular subject area is to begin with a definition in order to delimit the subject under investigation. In the case of business ethics, such a procedure is not as straightforward as one might expect. It is not that there is not a definition to be had, rather the reverse. One is faced with a plethora of definitions from which to choose. Lewis (1985) identified over three hundred definitions available in the literature, and since that date the number has undoubtedly increased. This chapter is concerned to account for such a variety of definitions by providing an account of the development of business ethics as an area of both academic research, business practice, and public concern.

## Defining the Subject

The range of definitions available is indicative of both the manner in which the subject has evolved and the recognition of its increased complexity. "Ethics" is defined by Hoffman & Moore (1990) as,

> the study of what is good or right for human beings. It asks what goals people ought to pursue and what actions they ought to perform.
>
> (1990:1)

It follows for those writers that " business ethics" is a branch of applied ethics, a view shared by many others (see e.g. Velasquez, 1988:18; McHugh, 1988:3; Epstein, 1989:593; and Donaldson, 1989:xii).

It is not sufficient, however, to simply locate it within the realms of moral philosophy. One must also acknowledge that the relationship of business ethics and moral philosophy is a problematic one. Firstly, moral philosophy provides "competing models of explanation" (Cooke, 1986:261) so that there is more than one "correct" solution to any given problem. Unfortunately business ethics cannot depend on the Olympian detachment of the "philosopher kings" favoured by the ancient Greeks to provide the "right" answer to a given problem. As Raphael observes,

> In philosophy, far more that in science, one is left in the end with a number of possible theories, none of them proved, none of them definitely disproved. The individual must then decide for himself which, if any, to accept.
>
> (1981:10)

Secondly, there is the issue of "praxis". Business ethics is an applied, practical area of investigation, it can never be reduced to the study and application of ethics in a social vacuum. It follows therefore that it cannot simply be viewed as the application of moral theory as a detached, academic activity. Nash (1990) acknowledges the complexity of the subject when she contends that,

> Business ethics is the study of how personal moral norms apply to the activities and goals of commercial enterprise. It is not a separate moral standard, but the study of how the business context poses its own unique problems for the moral person who acts as an agent of this system.
>
> (1990:5)

In acknowledging both the contextual and pragmatic nature of business ethics Nash extends the parameters of the subject beyond that of moral philosophy while also indicating the dynamic and evolving nature of the subject. De George (1986) echoes this in referring to business ethics as a "field", maintaining that it is still in the process of definition. In a later article, he developed this further in observing that,

> The field - is an interdisciplinary one. It is not defined by a single methodology. The methodologies of ethical and philosophical analysis, reasoning and argumentation are applicable, as are the methodologies of religious and theological thinking, and the methodologies of the various areas of business education. (1987:20)

In practice, any attempt at providing a succinct definition of business ethics may well be problematic unless it can encapsulate both the breadth and complexity of the subject area and acknowledge its interdisciplinary nature.

Business ethics as an academic area of knowledge and investigation is one important expression of both the increased power and influence of business activity upon twentieth century societies and individual lifestyles. It is also an expression of the various concerns regarding the effects of industry and commerce upon both the individual and society which have arisen during this century. In addition, in its various institutionalised expressions, business ethics also symbolises and expresses the concern of the business community to respond to such public concern and provide some form of reassurance. In considering the "history" of business ethics one can both chart the changing nature of concern, and how the subject has developed.

## A Brief History of Business Ethics

The precise "birth" or origins of business ethics as an identifiable area of concern are problematic, reflected in the various concerns of both philosophers and religious commentators with the effects of work and employment, and commerce and industry upon the well-being of both the individual and society. A pragmatic starting point is to view it as both a twentieth century phenomenon, and initially, a predominantly American one. This is not to imply that concerns with the effects of industrialization were not a concern in Britain and the Continent, but rather that it in the United States of America that "business ethics" as a distinct area of knowledge and practice was given initial expression.[1] Both McHugh (1988) and De George (1986) provide accounts of the evolution of business ethics thought and practice.

## Business Ethics: 1900 - 1960

Initially McHugh indicates that interest in business ethics grew out of a degree of disillusionment with liberal thought and practice, while De George points to the influence of the Papal Social Encyclicals which, beginning in the 1870's raised questions about just wages and the morality of capitalism.[2] These provided a focus for what De George refers to as a "Catholic social ethics", concerned with the rights of workers to decent conditions of employment and a living wage; for moral values as opposed to materialistic ones; and for improving the lot of the poor. In addition however, McHugh observes that another factor was the concern to provide both a rebuttal of, and an alternative to socialism which, in the early decades of the twentieth century appeared to provide a strong challenge to liberal economic orthodoxy. Related to this last point there was also the discussion of the merits and demerits of State intervention in the workings of the market.

Two other important factors were, firstly the perceived need to respond to the criticisms of the workings of monopoly capitalism and the concerns regarding the concentration of economic and industrial power in a relatively few hands. Secondly, there was the emergence of management as a distinct stratum within the business community and the need to both justify and define their role and responsibilities within the business community.

Four issues which emerged during this period are worthy of particular mention, as in some respects they formed the basis of much subsequent discussion and controversy. Firstly, with the development of a managerial stratum there evolved an acceptance that business ethics was primarily a management matter. Secondly, there was the gradual change in approach within business ethics from viewing it as primarily relating to the individual towards the idea of viewing the corporation as a moral unit. Thirdly, there was also the growth of professionalism in areas such as law, accountancy and advertising, and their formulation of their own codes of ethics. This not only prompted such bodies to comment on matters of both personal and corporate moral responsibility but also required a reaction from management practitioners in order to legitimate their role within the business enterprise, while also furnishing them with a role model to emulate as a means of reinforcing their claims to legitimacy. Fourthly, there was the growing realization that a moral approach by management involved both an internal and external dimension with regard to organisational activities.

**Business Ethics: 1960 -**

The 1960's are characterised by De George as the period of revolt against authority, student unrest, and the emergence of a "counter culture" which was anti-business in attitude and deeply suspicious of the military-industrial establishment identified by Mills (1956).

It was the sixties which witnessed the emergence of both consumerism and the growing concern with both the ecological problems posed by pollution and the disposal of nuclear waste, thereby emphasizing the need for business organisations to give increased concern to be seen as displaying corporate social responsibility. If the sixties witnessed business schools responding to such concerns with the provision of courses on social issues, and the writing of texts and treatises on corporate social responsibility, the perspective adopted was predominantly both managerial and legalistic. There was no systematic attention given to ethical theory.

It was the seventies which saw the development of business ethics as a academic field according to De George, aided and abetted by the entry of a significant number of philosophers into the area of study.[3] It was during this period McHugh notes that the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business insisted that ethics become part of American business education. Such developments prompted various attempts by both philosophers and theologians to impose some form of theoretical order on the various

discussions of morality and business which had taken place in earlier years (e.g. Barry, 1983; Beauchamp & Bowie, 1979; Regan, 1984; Adair, 1980).

Two other important developments are worthy of note during this period. Firstly, along with the continued importance attached to the concept of corporate social responsibility, links were also made between ethics and corporate strategy (e.g. Daneke & Lemak, 1985; Murray & Montanari, 1986; Gilbert, 1986; Freeman & Gilbert, 1988; Epstein, 1987, 1989) reflecting the perceived inter-relationships existing between individual ethics within the workplace and the effects of corporate-level decisions and actions. Secondly, there has been the increased development of links between business ethics and the literature more commonly associated with organisational behaviour and the sociology of management. This has related business ethics, business success and adaptability to change to the concept of organisational culture, (e.g. Pascale & Athos, 1981; Peters & Waterman, 1982; McCoy, 1985; Pastin, 1988).

If by the late eighties De George could argue that business ethics had become an established academic field of study, with the "institutionalisation" of the subject area through the provision of textbooks, courses, conferences and seminars, the establishment of academic centres of study, and the founding of academic journals devoted to the subject, he also acknowledged that the field was still an evolving one identifying several areas requiring further development:

1. The development of new cases and untapped issues for use in undergraduate teaching.

2. The development of programs of business ethics at the MBA level.

3. The development of research, involving the integration of knowledge across academic boundaries.

4. The development of a positive side to business ethics, as a means of counter-acting the current emphasis on the negative aspects of business activity.

5. The need for more integrated studies, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the field.

6. A closer relation between researchers and the business community.

7. The need for there to be closer cooperation in the development of the field on an international level, reflecting, in part, the increasing importance of international business activities.

(De George, 1987)

Such concerns are partially echoed by Cooke (1986), although in arguing that business ethics has reached four "watersheds" or "crossroads" which he claims will determine the viability of business ethics in the years ahead he adds a further dimension to the debate regarding business ethics. He contends that there is,

> The need for a multi-disciplinary focus, rather than an inter-disciplinary one, which tends towards both competition and conflict.

(Cooke, 1986:)

In doing so, he draws attention to the importance of the academic environment for both the evolution, development, and construction of business ethics as an academic body of both knowledge and practice. While such a brief and partial, and admittedly Americanized account, of the history of business ethics is obviously incomplete, it does provide some important indicators concerning the way in which business ethics has evolved as an area of academic study and practice.[4] Five aspects are worthy of note and further comment:

1. The shift in focus from the individual to the corporation.

2. The belief that business ethics is primarily a managerial concern.

3. The development of disciplinary approaches other than philosophy and theology.

4. The interlinking of business ethics with other areas of academic and managerial concern, such as corporate strategy and organisational culture.

5. The need to locate business ethics, as an academic body of knowledge and practice within an analysis of the changing nature of the academic environment.

In effect, in considering the evolution, or history of business ethics, one is also identifying the changing dimensions of the subject area or "field". One also becomes aware of why the subject matter of business ethics is necessarily an evolving one, reflecting both the growth in knowledge relating to the subject, and the changing political-economic and cultural context within which business ethics can be located. Such complexity is partially indicated by the various "Levels of Analysis" which have been identified by writers concerned to impose some form of order upon the subject.

## Levels of Analysis

One of the main questions which arises from attempting to delimit or define the nature, or scope, of business ethics is the range and diversity of the subject matter, and how it can be structured in order to facilitate analysis and comprehension. Several writers have contributed to this task by identifying various "levels" into which the subject can be sub-divided. McHugh (1988) indicates something of the sheer breadth of the field in observing that the subject is concerned with the moral aspects of capitalism and democracy at one end of the analytical spectrum, and with the issue of individual morality at the other. Hoffman & Moore (1990) provide a somewhat more structured approach by identifying four levels of analysis as existing within business ethics:

1. The system level, concerned with the nature of capitalism and the free market.

2. The analysis of the nature and role of the business organisation within the economic system.

3. The examination of particular ethical issues as they arise within the course of economic activity, e.g. employee rights, product safety, hiring practices.

4. The examination and ethical assessment of the values which are encapsulated within the structure and nature of business activity, e.g. freedom of opportunity, economic growth, and materialism.

One question left unresolved here, is what precisely is meant, or implied by the "system level"? Is it concerned exclusively with the nature and effects of the free market system, or does it also seek to encompass the wider socio-cultural context within which the free market system is embedded? This is particularly important when considering the role and effects of the economy upon contemporary Western society.

While it is somewhat unclear, as to whether Hoffman & Moore's third and fourth "levels" relate indirectly to the individual working within a business context, De George (1987) is perhaps somewhat more explicit in identifying three levels of analysis:

1. The "macro-level", i.e. the economic system of free enterprise.

2. The study of business operating within the free market system.

3. The morality of individuals operating within the business system.

One question which is left unresolved here is whether De George's second level of analysis is concerned primarily with the study of a single business organisation, and/or with the interrelationships existing between individual firms? He contends that the field of business ethics includes all three levels, but indicates an additional factor of complexity when he observes that one is also concerned with "their interconnections". The unresolved question here is the theoretical framework within which such "interconnectedness" may be best analyzed and comprehended?

For his part, Epstein (1989) contends that business ethics encompasses four distinct levels of analysis:

1. The macro, or systemic, involving the nature and performance of "total political economies"

2. Intermediate, involving the conduct of "collective business actors", e.g. industry or trade associations.[5]

3. Organisational - considering the policies and actions of specific firms.

4. Individual - the behaviour of identifiable human actors.

Such a classification helps to clarify the uncertainty contained within De George's classificatory scheme, although one might wish that there was further elaboration as to what might be contained, or implied, within Epstein's third level of the "organisational". How is one meant to theorize and analyze the policies and actions undertaken within an organisational context? Some additional guidance is provided in this respect by McDonald & Zepp (1989) who, while setting out guidelines for the establishment of ethical priorities within organisations, provide further elaboration of the levels of analysis which one is concerned with. Focusing on the internal processes of the organisation, they identify three levels of analysis:

1. The individual dimension

2. Group/peer influence

3. Organisational strategies

Such a classificatory model is important in that it draws explicit attention to the influence of group and peer influences upon behaviour within an organisational context, acknowledging that the individual organisational actor is not a "moral isolate". However, there is still uncertainty regarding how one might choose to understand or interpret "organisational strategies".

Does this relate to official management plans, policies, and strategies, or might it encompass the more political processes found within organisations as identified by such writers as Mintzberg (1985) or Lee & Lawrence (1987). If one approaches this from an open-systems perspective, concerned to relate corporate strategy to perceived changes in the organisation's external environment, what theoretical paradigm is one meant to adopt (Whittington, 1993)?

**The Problematic Nature of "Levels of Analysis"**

It is clear that the actual number of "levels" identified by writers varies, and it is open to conjecture how one is meant to interpret the social, psychological, and political processes at work both within any given level of analysis, and their possible "interconnections". The very concept of "levels of analysis" is open to question concerning its heuristic value unless located within some identifiable theoretical perspective. Such a "piecemeal" approach to the study of business ethics, while understandable as a means of facilitating analysis and understanding of otherwise complex social phenomena, does run the risk of lending itself to charges of oversimplification and fragmentation of the phenomenon under investigation. In addition, it could also be argued that such divisions of focus and concern also facilitate the management of business ethics on the part of both the business community and the academic establishment. There is also the need to both make explicit and be aware of the particular academic filters and shortcomings contained within any given academic disciplinary approach, and the criticisms and limitations of any theoretical perspective which may be adopted.

In some respects, the various "levels of analysis" identified by the above-mentioned writers provide one partial expression of the way in which the thinking about and conceptualisation of business ethics has evolved. One the one hand they symbolize the gradual movement away from the predominance of philosophical and theological perspectives towards business ethics, and their emphasis upon normative and prescriptive approaches, towards a more descriptive, and social scientific perspective, concerned to try and understand both "ethical dilemmas" and individual actors within the organisational contexts within which they are situated.

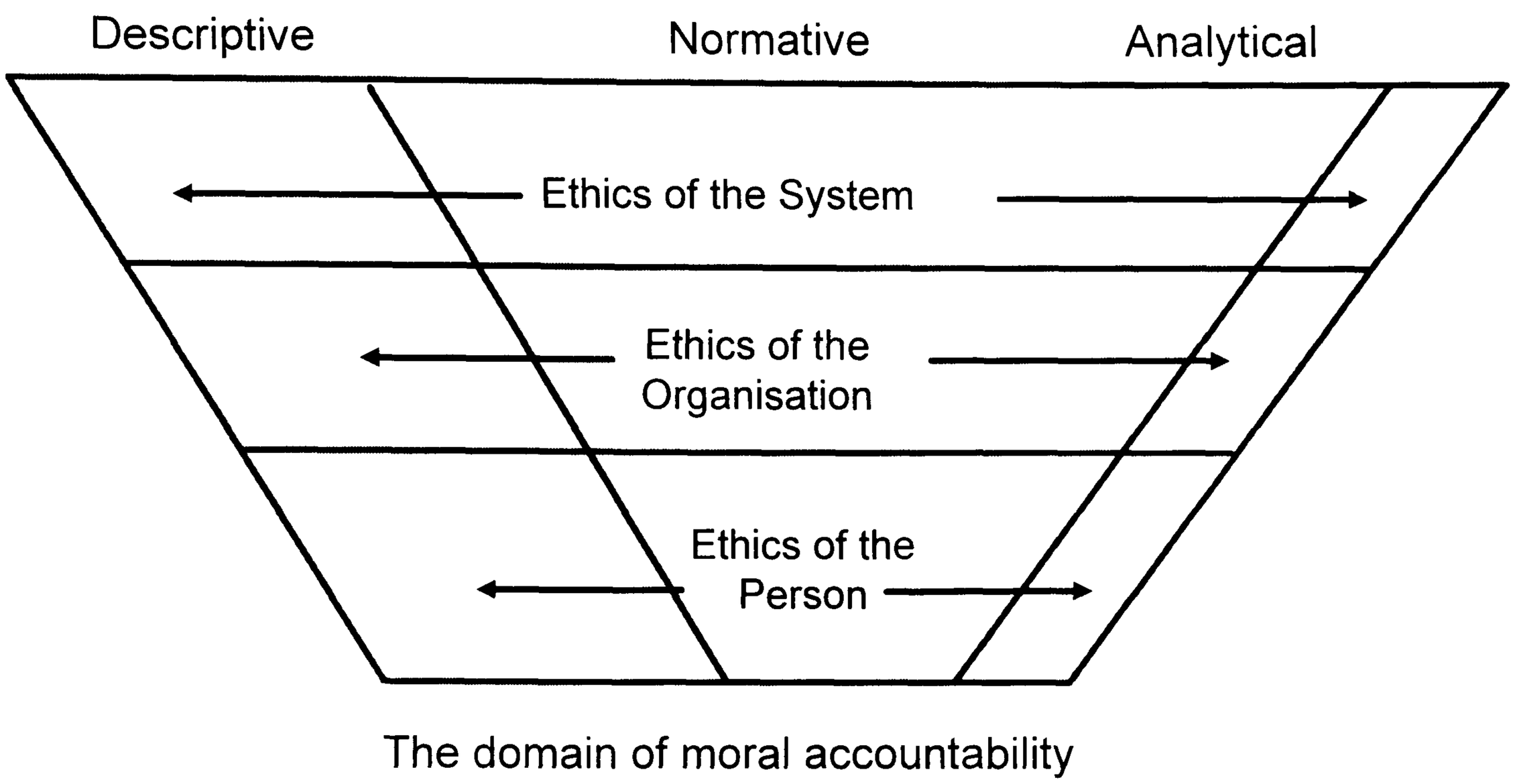
Goodpastor (1983, 1985) is unusual among those providing a predominately philosophical approach towards business ethics in indicating the need to comprehend ethical issues within some overall explanatory theoretical framework. In emphasizing the importance of "moral accountability" in the study of business activity, and the transactions which take place within the business environment he identifies three, interacting levels of analysis which he terms,

1. Ethics of the person

2. Ethics of the organisation

3. Ethics of the system

(See: Figure 1)




The domain of moral accountability

*Figure 1* Goodpastor (1985:167)

Like De George (1987) he draws attention to the interconnections existing between the levels, posing the question,

> Might there be relationships among the three levels of moral accountability that contribute to our understanding of each issue or problem that we meet - much as when we look through different lenses on a microscope or camera, we reveal successive layers of detail and various kinds of kinship among them? - Phenomena on one level might be expected to illuminate or even explain phenomena on other levels.
>
> (Goodpastor, 1985:167)

Such observations are important in indicating the need to contextualise the individual manifestations that are the concern of business ethics, whether they are: ethical dilemmas, the particular actions, or non-actions of individuals, or the actions undertaken in the name of particular

organisations. There is also, however, the need to both contextualise and account for the phenomenon of business ethics itself, as a "field" or area of academic discourse and practice, and to try to understand why certain issues and activities may now be perceived to fall within the remit of business ethics rather than other academic disciplines or areas of managerial practice. Goodpastor provides some examples of this when noting that many issues that may now be addressed under the heading of "business ethics" were previously dealt under different headings. Issues concerning the treatment of individuals within organisations, for example, have been dealt with under such headings as "human relations in organisations"; "personnel and industrial relations, or more recently, "Human Resource Management". The relationship of business organisations to the wider society, have been addressed under such headings as, "business and society", or "business - government relations", and more recently in terms of "organisations and the environment" or even "corporate strategy".

Such observations refer one back to the problematic matter of defining precisely what business ethics as a "field" of investigation encapsulates within its area of study, and how it can be clearly demarcated from other areas of academic discourse and practice. One is forced to conclude that such a clear demarcation is not possible at present given both the ongoing development of business ethics itself as an area of academic discourse and practice, and the broader environmental and intellectual context within which it is situated.

In seeking to comprehend and account for the phenomenon of business ethics as an area of academic knowledge and business practice it is necessary to undertake an analysis of the socio-cultural and economic environment within which it is located in order to understand the complex nature of the phenomenon in question.
Before undertaking such an analysis however, it will be helpful to take a more detailed look at the phenomenon that is business ethics.

**What is Business Ethics?**

If previously the concern has been to comment upon the problematic nature of providing an acceptable definition of business ethics, illustrated by referring to both the history, or evolution, of the phenomenon and its complexity by exploring the ramifications arising from its various "levels of analysis", it is now necessary to further explore the disciplinary bases of the subject. This can be accomplished by considering what business ethics texts say about the nature and composition of business ethics.

Writers such as Beauchamp & Bowie (1979), Velasquez (1988), and Hoffman & Moore (1990) provide an indicative insight into the range of theories on offer. Broadly speaking, they encompass a brief treatment and comparison of such theories as: psychological egoism; ethical egoism;

utilitarianism; Kant's categorical imperatives; Rawls' theory of justice; and the question of cultural and individual relativism. The space and depth of treatment accorded to individual theories varies, reflecting both the predilection of the author and/or the focus of the publication, e.g. cultural relativism is accorded a more detailed consideration in texts dealing with international business (e.g. Donaldson, 1989). It may also reflect certain assumptions regarding the knowledge, and interest, of the audience at which it is directed.

In an informative study of business ethics texts Derry & Green (1989) undertook a survey of the use made of ethical theory in twenty-five business ethics textbooks published during the preceding ten years. Almost without exception they found that the texts began by categorising normative ethical theories under two broad headings: consequentialist (or teleological) and non-consequentialist (deontological). Consequentialist views were usually represented by utilitarianism, which often involved distinguishing between Act and Rule utilitarianism (e.g. Beauchamp & Bowie, 1979; Velasquez, 1988). Non-consequentialist views were usually represented by discussion of Ross' prima facie view, and Kant's formalism.[6]

Derry & Green's article draws attention to two important issues. Firstly, they re-emphasize both the diversity and complexity of the ethical theories which are available and applicable to the practice of business ethics. Secondly, they highlight the problem of how students and business practitioners, coming from a non-philosophical background, can be adequately introduced to, and educated in the use of such theories.[7]

The majority of textbooks reviewed by Derry & Green required the reader to learn,

1. The basic arguments of the major ethical theories

2. How to apply the theories to real life situations, and

3. How to choose between conflicting theories or resolve their differences.

While acknowledging that most texts achieved a reasonable success with the first objective, they observed that the latter two left something to be desired.

The reason for referring to Derry & Green's paper is not to criticize the philosophical content of business ethics textbooks, (something which in any event the present writer is not qualified to comment upon). Rather, it is to re-emphasize the need to locate any such critique within an analysis which takes adequate account of the context within which business ethics is undertaken as: an area of academic study and research; provided as part of

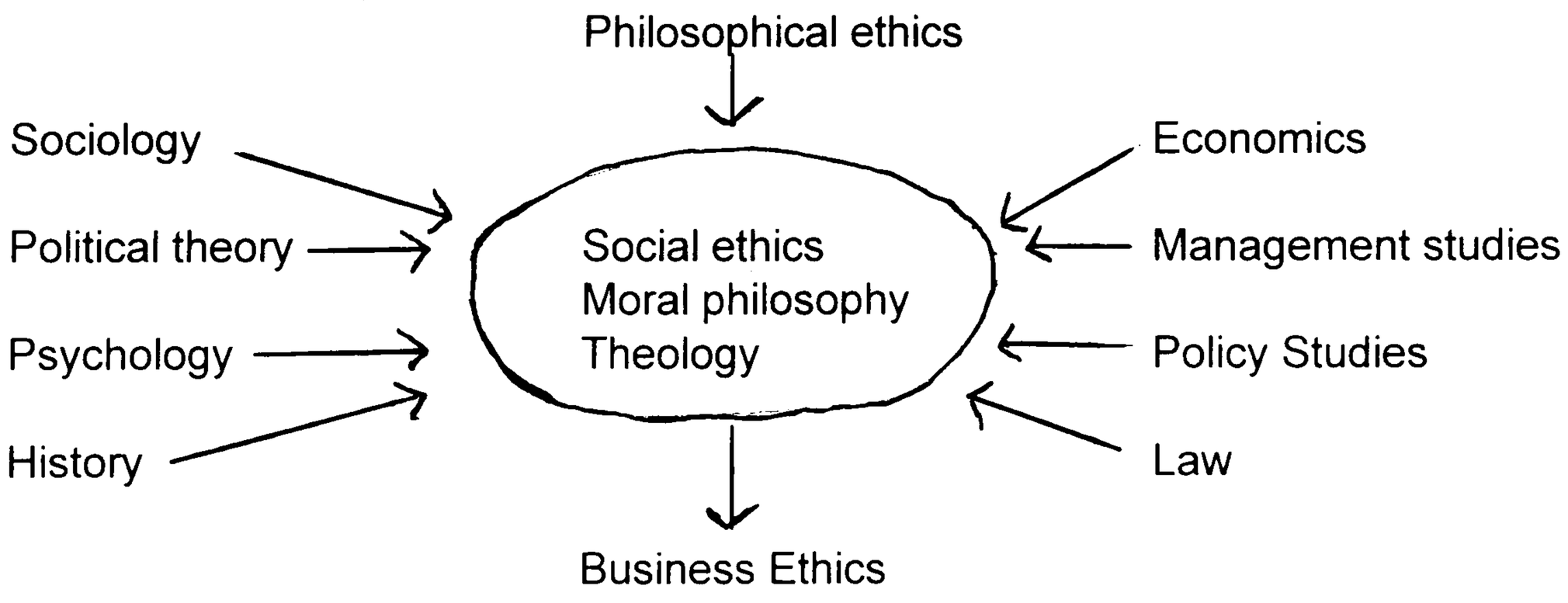
management and business education; and made available to business practitioners as a guide to good business practice and personal behaviour.

In practice, the relationship between these three areas of interest can be expected to be both a dynamic and a dialectical one, especially when one acknowledges that the three constituents identified are not necessarily internally homogeneous with regard to either their specific concerns or their objectives regarding the practice of business ethics. In this respect De George (1987:2) correctly draws attention to both the interdisciplinary nature of the field and the various methodological approaches which may be adopted towards the subject.

It is also necessary, however, to re-emphasize that business ethics is intended to be an applied subject, and that it is necessary to take account of both the situational context within which ethical issues occur, and also the beliefs and values of the actors involved. Trundle (1989) indicates this in observing that,

> ethical concerns are grasped quite differently in the shops and "front offices" of companies than in the classrooms of universities.
>
> (Trundle, 1989:26)

Such comments indicate the increasing importance of a social scientific perspective towards business ethics rather than the more traditional one which tends to perceive it as predominantly a branch of applied moral philosophy. The interdisciplinary nature of business ethics is illustrated by McHugh (1988:16) who indicates the variety of disciplines contributing to the subject,




**Business Ethics: Theoretical Discipline and/or Commodity?**

The different contributions to the development of business ethics provided by these disciplines are both testimony to the complexity of the phenomenon that is business ethics and to its interdisciplinary nature. What

such a model does not indicate is the level of debate, competition and controversy that finds expression within the various academic discussions on the subject. In some respects this is quite understandable given the complexity of the phenomenon and the different theoretical approaches towards the subject adopted by the contributing disciplines. However, it is also worth noting that business ethics is of growing importance within both the academic and business communities, as such it provides an opportunity for both research and development and, in an increasingly commercially-oriented academic world, funding and consultancy. In this respect business ethics, as a developing area of academic activity, also provides an area of both opportunity and competition. As such, the differences of opinion, theoretical perspectives and approaches to the subject do not always simply reflect disinterested academic concerns. If business ethics can be said to express something of the complexity of the contemporary world of business, it is also an area of academic contestation.

One brief example may serve to illustrate the intensity of feeling which may be aroused amongst contributors to such debates. In 1986 De George published a paper which attempted to distinguish between business ethics and theological ethics, contending that,

> The philosopher in business ethics starts from the assumption that he can deal with moral issues in business independently of any consideration of God's existence or of revelation. He attempts to work on the basis of reason and human experience alone.
>
> (1986:42)

Published originally in the Journal of Business Ethics, the paper prompted such a response that the Journal's editors devoted a subsequent issue to the various and heated responses.[8] Such was the level of response to his original paper, contending that he had misunderstood and under-estimated the importance of the contribution of theological ethics to business ethics that De George subsequently acknowledged that his initial treatment of theological ethics had been inadequate (De George, 1986, 1987). While this debate illustrates the genuine differences of academic perspectives existing within the subject, this may not be the case in all circumstances.

Paradoxically perhaps, one is forced to consider the possibility that not all activity and development within business ethics is undertaken for ethical reasons. The academic arguments advanced from the professorial chairs, research foundations, institutes, and ivory towers of the academic world are not simply the detached, objective views of unworldly academics. Business ethics is an increasingly viable area of academic activity. If business ethics can be said to be concerned with the activity of business, then it must also be acknowledged that it is also, itself, an area of commercial application and opportunity.

Such an observation is not intended as a cynical comment upon the endeavours of business ethicists, of whatever academic background or persuasion. The intention is to emphasize the importance of taking account of both the business and academic environments within which business ethics, as a body of knowledge, theory, and practice has, and is still evolving.

**Business Ethics as a Social Science**

Earlier, it was observed that McHugh had noted that the late seventies and eighties had witnessed a growing relationship between business ethics and organisational behaviour, and the linking of business ethics to concerns relating to business performance and adaptability. It is now necessary to consider such a development in more detail as it provides not only an important illustration of the academic breadth and complexity of business ethics, but also an important example of the contradictory pressures and interests which have been influential in the development of business ethics as an area of both knowledge and practice at the present time.

Initially, one might expect that the links between business ethics and such social science perspectives as: social psychology, sociology, organisational behaviour, and management studies would be well developed and self-evident. It is somewhat surprising therefore to find Donaldson (1989) observing that,

> The literature on organisational behaviour would appear to be the natural place in which to find detailed discussions of ethical matters, but such discussions are very rare.
>
> (1989:23)

In some respects such a comment is something of an over-statement and appears to ignore the contributions of social psychologists such as Kohlberg (1969) and Trevino (1986) to the development of business ethics. However, it also reflects the fact that much of the organisational behaviour literature does appear to be relatively silent on the matter of ethics. It may be, as Feldman (1996) observes, that many writers on organisations and management avoid the issue by reducing, or subsuming, issues of morality and ethics within a discussion of "organisational politics", but that in itself raises question regarding the underlying assumptions regarding both the nature of organisations and the role of management. It also poses the question of <u>why</u> the literature on organisational behaviour has apparently avoided explicit discussion of the topic?[9]

In drawing attention to the fact that as it has developed in the latter part of this century, business ethics has come to be viewed by many as being predominantly a managerial concern, McHugh (1988) draws attention to

another important, and often under-stated dimension of business ethics - its relationship with issues of organisational control and, by implication, the role of management in this process. Boatright (1988), in identifying five models of the managerial role within organisations: the "engineering" model; the "economic" model; the "formal organisation" model; the "political" model"; and the "management of values" model, suggests that it is the last one which has most immediate relevance for the inculcation of ethical values within the organisation. However, such a classification of managerial roles and apparent division of managerial activities grossly oversimplifies the processual nature of managerial work. It is not clear, for example how one can easily distinguish the articulation of managerial values from managerial activities and objectives associated with either the "engineering" or "economic" model of management?

It is important to note that the concern to relate business ethics to organisational performance appears to coincide with several important issues confronting the business community in recent years: the problem of organisational control; the concern with improving productivity and competitiveness; the concern to facilitate organisational change; and the increased public concern with both business behaviour and its regulation.

It is perhaps therefore, not entirely surprising to find that the nineteen-eighties witnessed an increased concern with the "internal" dimensions of organisational behaviour. One can also identify two ostensibly conflicting approaches within the literature: "the ethics of management" and "the management of ethics". While the former is concerned with investigating and commenting upon various aspects of organisational performance, and the nature of, and responsibilities of management for such activities, the latter reflects managerial concern to influence and control the behaviour of organisational actors. It is here that one can discern a conflict of interests between social scientists concerned to understand the organisational factors influencing individuals' behaviour within the work environment, and the concern by managers to influence, modify, and control such behaviour in the pursuit of organisational objectives - which is itself an ethical issue.

In terms of the internal debates within the business ethics literature, such a change in focus, towards a more overtly social scientific approach, has been described in terms of contrasting the "normative", or "prescriptive" approaches which reflect a more philosophical approach towards the subject, with "descriptive" or "contextualist" approaches which favour the social sciences. While it is overly simplistic to distinguish sharply between the two, the shift in emphasis towards the latter, particularly during the nineteen-eighties serves to re-emphasize the fact that business ethics, perceived as a socially constructed body of knowledge and practice, is itself both a product, and expression of the socio-cultural and economic environment within which it is located. In considering a number of such contextualist approaches one can see how the focus of such research reflects a concern to both understand the organisational factors affecting

individual behaviour, while also being part of a broader academic concern regarding the very nature of organisations themselves (e.g. Burrel & Morgan, 1979; Morgan, 1986; Clegg, 1990; Reed & Hughes, 1992; Hassard & Parker, 1993). In this respect, as will be developed in more detail in a later chapter, the contextualist approach to business ethics can be located within a broader explanatory framework.

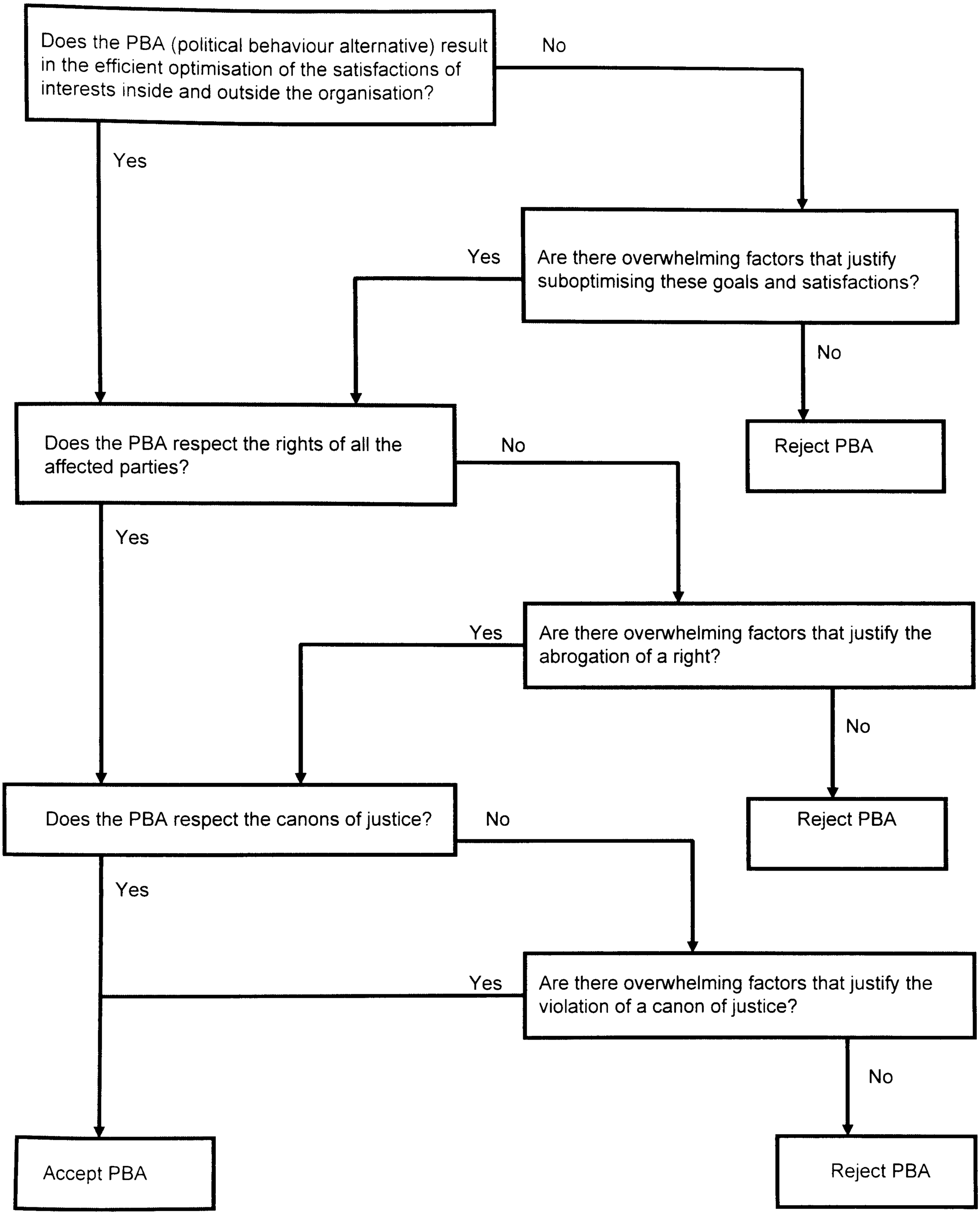
**Contextual Business Ethics**

A number of writers in the eighties (e.g. Fritzsche & Becker 1984; Bommer et al, 1987) observed that little effort had been made to link ethical theory to how managers actually behaved while at work. McCoy (1985:44) observed that ethical theory by itself was insufficient as a means of accounting for how individuals behaved, or misbehaved, within business organisations. For his part, Brady (1985, 1986) contended that it was unreasonable to expect business people to make use of ethical theory in attempting to resolve problems arising within the workplace when the two main normative theories - utilitarianism and deontologicalism - appeared to be fundamentally antagonistic towards each other (see also Jensen & Wygant, 1990).

It is perhaps not surprising that a number of writers comment upon the prevalence of utilitarianism among managers, what Pastin (1988) refers to as "end point ethics". Cavanagh et al (1981) observe that the emphasis upon "goals" in much of the business and management literature may well tend to focus management's attention upon outcomes and results. While Davis (1980) notes that the apparent tendency towards utilitarianism by managers may be encouraged by their need to make use of economic criteria in measuring and evaluating the costs and benefits of a particular decision or action.[10]

That many managers appear to adopt a utilitarian approach when dealing with ethical issues is not perhaps particularly surprising, given that they are often working within a free market economic context, which does tend to emphasize the importance of the "bottom-line". This is probably reinforced by the emphasis upon functionalist and systemic approaches to organisations and problem-solving found within many management textbooks, and the emphasis upon problem-solving in much management training and education.

Whether managers <u>always</u> make use of an exclusively utilitarian approach is much more problematic. Some writers, such as Brady (1985) suggest that in order to overcome the limitations of utilitarianism, one should combine its use with a deontological approach. The idea here seems to be that rather than accept the limitations of any <u>one</u> ethical theory, one can make use of a number of theories in the hope of achieving a better solution to a given problem or dilemma. Cavanagh et al (1981) suggest the integration of utilitarianism, rights, and justice, into a coherent approach towards problem-solving. (<u>See: Figure 2</u>)




A Decision Tree for Incorporating Ethics into Political Behaviour Decisions

*Figure 2* Cavanagh, Mobere & Velasquez, 1981: 368

Likewise Pastin (1988) advocates the use of all three normative theories as managerial "tools" in problem-solving, and McCoy (1985), when investigating the "operative ethics" or ethics-in-use by practising managers found that they did not choose between any one ethical theory but appeared to adopt a pluralistic approach. While such an approach may be somewhat heretical when viewed from the standpoint of an ethicist, it is probably a more accurate reflection of the various ways in which managers make sense of, and respond to problems encountered within the workplace. It is not surprising that some form of "ethical pluralism" occurs when managers are confronted with a particular problem. What is not necessarily clear is the manner in which such an integration of ethical theories takes place, or indeed if managers even consciously conceptualise the problem in terms of ethical theory?

**Theorizing and Modelling the Context**

Writers such as Nielsen (1988) argue that there is a need to locate the subject matter of business ethics within a context of individual meaning, interpretation, judgement, and praxis. There is a need to understand how individuals make sense of, and evaluate issues arising within the workplace. In addition, there is also the question of whether individuals are consistent with regard to how they interpret, evaluate, and respond to particular issues, or whether they vary depending upon personal and situational factors?

Such an observation is given some support by Snell (1990) who contends that cultural factors in Britain tend to be pluralistic regarding morality and ethics, and that this allows the development of a "personal morality" on the part of British managers, i.e.

> the set of ethical positions to which an individual holds
>
> (1990:13)

This raises the question of how such a "personal morality" is created in the first place, and whether it is consistent, or changes due to circumstance and experience?
One approach to this issue has been to point to the importance of values. Posner & Schmidt (1987) contend that it is through the "prism" of their values that the business ethics, and consequently the organisational policies of managers are elaborated. Likewise McDonald & Zepp (1989) also point to the importance of personal values in influencing individual behaviour.

Harrison (1981) suggests that values serve as standards that guide individual conduct. Such values, he maintains, define the boundaries of what is held to be ethical behaviour by the individual. It follows from this that an individual's values will influence any decision making process in which the individual is involved.

England (1967) studied the value systems of over 1000 American managers, using a personal values questionnaire, dividing his findings into "operative", "intended" and "adopted" values. While useful in distinguishing between those identified values which appeared to influence subsequent behaviour, and those which although claimed by the respondent did not appear to influence behaviour to any great extent, he acknowledged that it was necessary to take account of environmental factors, observing that,

> values are one part of the story, but not the whole story (1967:55)

In general England described the managers in his survey as being "pragmatically oriented" and their operative values as focusing upon: efficiency; profits; leadership; productivity; success; ability; ambition; and competition. One might suggest that such a compilation of values held by managers is not entirely surprising given the nature of the working environment.[11]

Concentrating solely upon the values held by individual managers is acknowledged by both England and Harrison to be insufficient for accounting for actual behaviour and that it is necessary to take account of environmental and situational factors.[12]
One approach which seeks to take this into account is "social learning theory". This is the approach adopted by Stead et al (1990) who suggest that the ethical norms which guide an individual's behaviour will vary according to differences in both personality and socialisation factors. Drawing upon the work of a number of contributors to the area (Cavanagh et al, 1981; Forsyth, 1980; Fritzsche & Becker, 1984; Boal & Perry, 1985) they contend that individuals have different "ethical decision ideologies", or cognitive frameworks which influence their decisions and behaviour.[13]

Social learning theorists also maintain that past decisions are an important influence upon both current and future decisions, so that it is possible to speak of an individual having an "ethical decision history". The manner, however, in which one's "decision history" develops is not simply a reflection of an individual's social and moral development, organisational and situational factors can be expected to play an important part in influencing the way in which an individual behaves. These may include: the philosophies of senior management; the behaviour of immediate superiors; the influence of one's fellow workers and peers; and the organisation's systems of both reward and control. In addition to such personal and internal organisational factors it is also necessary to acknowledge that there may be external factors which are likely to influence both the philosophies and behaviour of managers and employees, and which may in turn affect the internal reinforcement mechanisms that are intended to influence individual behaviour while at work. One important example of this is the contemporary pressure upon many managers and organisational personnel

to be concerned with short-run profits and cost savings, what Nash (1990:121) refers to the "unarguable importance of the bottom line". The various situational factors affecting ethical behaviour within the workplace are modelled by Stead et al, which seeks to combine the contributions of a number of writers on the subject into an integrated approach to the issue. (See: Figure 3)

In a somewhat similar fashion, Jensen & Wygant (1990), also adopt a social-psychological, and social learning approach to the subject, and are concerned to identify the factors which may encourage the development of ethical behaviour within the business context. Like Stead et al, they maintain that ethical behaviour is influenced by both personal, internal standards or values, and also by external, social standards articulated by the rules, procedures, and control mechanisms of the organisation. Drawing upon Bandura's (1986) writings on "social-cognitive theory" they develop their "Developmental Self-Valuing Theory", contending that in order to understand the nature of ethical behaviour, both the nature of the self, and the situation in which the individual is located must be taken into account.[14] (See: Figure 4)

Both Stead at al, and Jensen & Wygant draw upon social learning theory in order to indicate how an individual's moral beliefs and subsequent behaviour are the product of both social interaction and situational factors within the workplace. The overall emphasis is on perceiving individual behaviour as being the product of both earlier socialisation factors, workplace experiences, and the particular situational factors affecting individual ethical issues or dilemmas as they arise during the performance of workplace activities.

Another writer seeking to combine the cognitive and evaluative processes of the individual with situational factors influencing actual decision making behaviour is Trevino (1986). (See: Figure 5)

While acknowledging that Kohlberg's social-psychological six-stage model of moral development may be useful in certain contexts, she contends that it is limited in that such tests of moral judgement are limited to the cognitive level of analysis, that is, how individuals think about moral dilemmas, not how they behave, that is, what they actually do in a given situation that requires a decision.

Nielsen (1988) lends support to Trevino's stance in observing that for many people "knowing" what is right or ethical is not necessarily the same as "acting". Similarly, Forsyth (1980) in undertaking research into individual's "ethical decision ideologies", observed that while an individual's ethical ideology, or belief system, may be closely related to his or her's moral judgements, the relationship between ideology and behaviour was more tenuous. Likewise Laczniak (1983) maintains that although an individual's

values may be the final standard by which they judge an action, they may not be the "determining reason" for one's actual behaviour.[15]

It is worth noting in this context that Zey-Ferrell et al (1979) in a study of unethical behaviour among marketing personnel observed that group pressure upon an individual may be sufficient to ensure that the individual complies with group norms without necessarily internalising the group's values.

The relationship between values and behaviour is a contentious one. While England's study tends to support the view that where there is a conflict between personal values and those of the organisation, it is the latter which will prevail, Monsen et al (1966) take the opposite view. Harrison, in reviewing a selection of literature on the topic concludes that the evidence tends to suggest that where there is a conflict of values it is the organisational values which will predominate.[16] However he also comments that in such a situation,

> It is more likely that the manager would adapt his or her personal values to the basic purpose of the organisation in such a way as to promote self-interest.
>
> (Harrison, 1981:167)

By such an observation Harrison again indicates the importance of situational factors in influencing an individual's stated beliefs, values, and actual behaviour. Quite how a manager may "adapt" his or her values to the perceived requirements of the organisation is not clear. It may reflect some reorientation of priorities within the individual's value system, or some sort of trade-off between preferred values and what is felt to be politically feasible?[17]

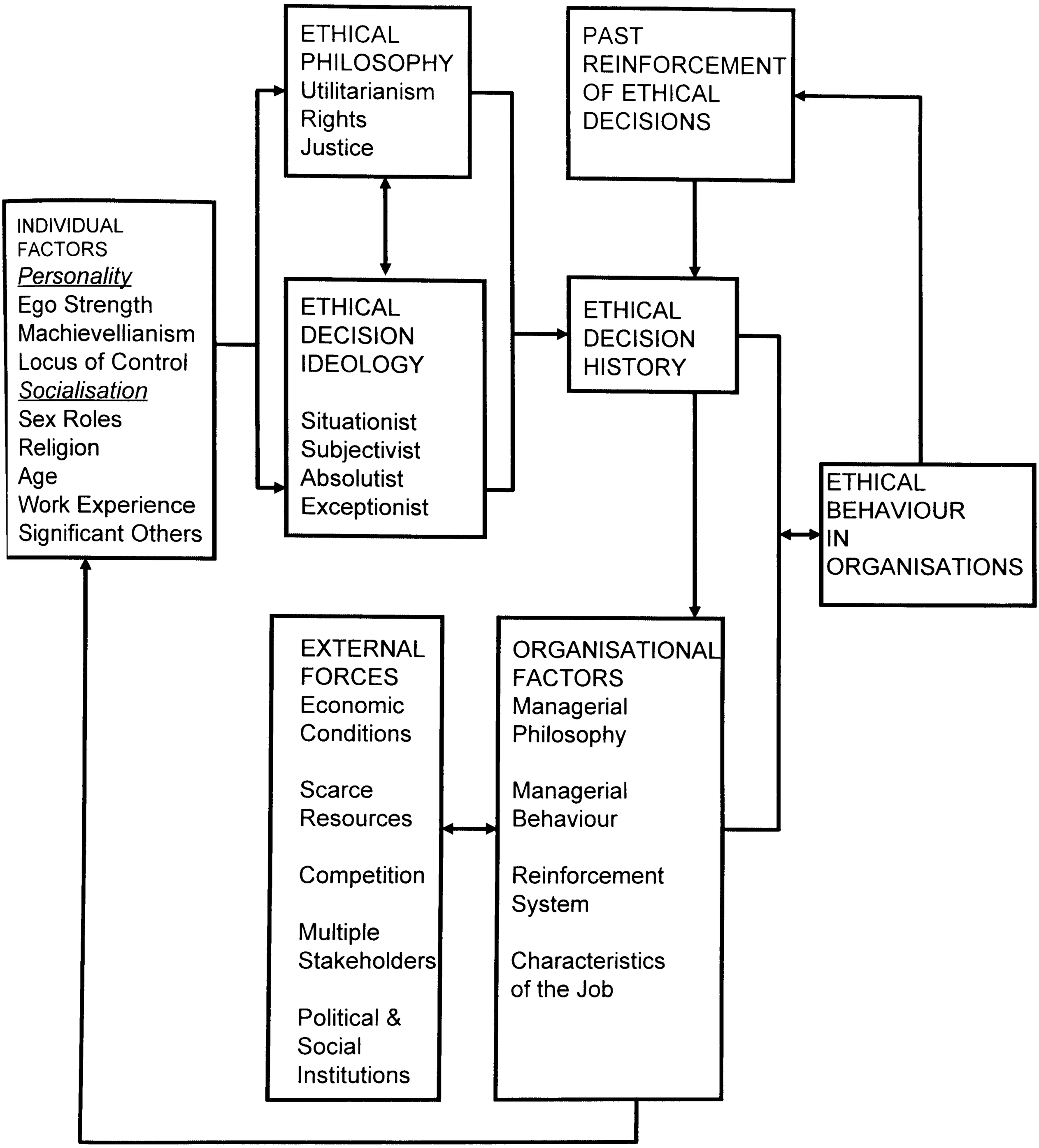
In seeking to identify what such situational factors are Bommer et al (1987) draw attention to the importance of reference group theory as a means of analyzing the variety of pressures which a manager may encounter arising from the variety of roles he is required to undertake in fulfilling the requirements of the job (See e.g. Mintzberg, 1975; Boatright, 1988). (See: Figure 6)

Trevino (1986) observes that both the characteristics of the job and the organisation's culture may influence the moral development of the individual and that as a result one cannot assume that, with reference to Kohlberg's Levels of Moral Development, an individual's moral development is neither "frozen" or static. The reference to the effects of the organisational culture on not only an individual's behaviour but also the way in which they may interpret and make sense of a particular situation is emphasized in the findings of Zey-Ferrell et al (1979) and Zey-Ferrell & Ferrell (1982). They suggest that an individual's perceptions of what constitutes ethical or

unethical behaviour is influenced by peer group pressure. Another factor they draw attention to is the "perceived opportunity" as an additional factor influencing actual behaviour.

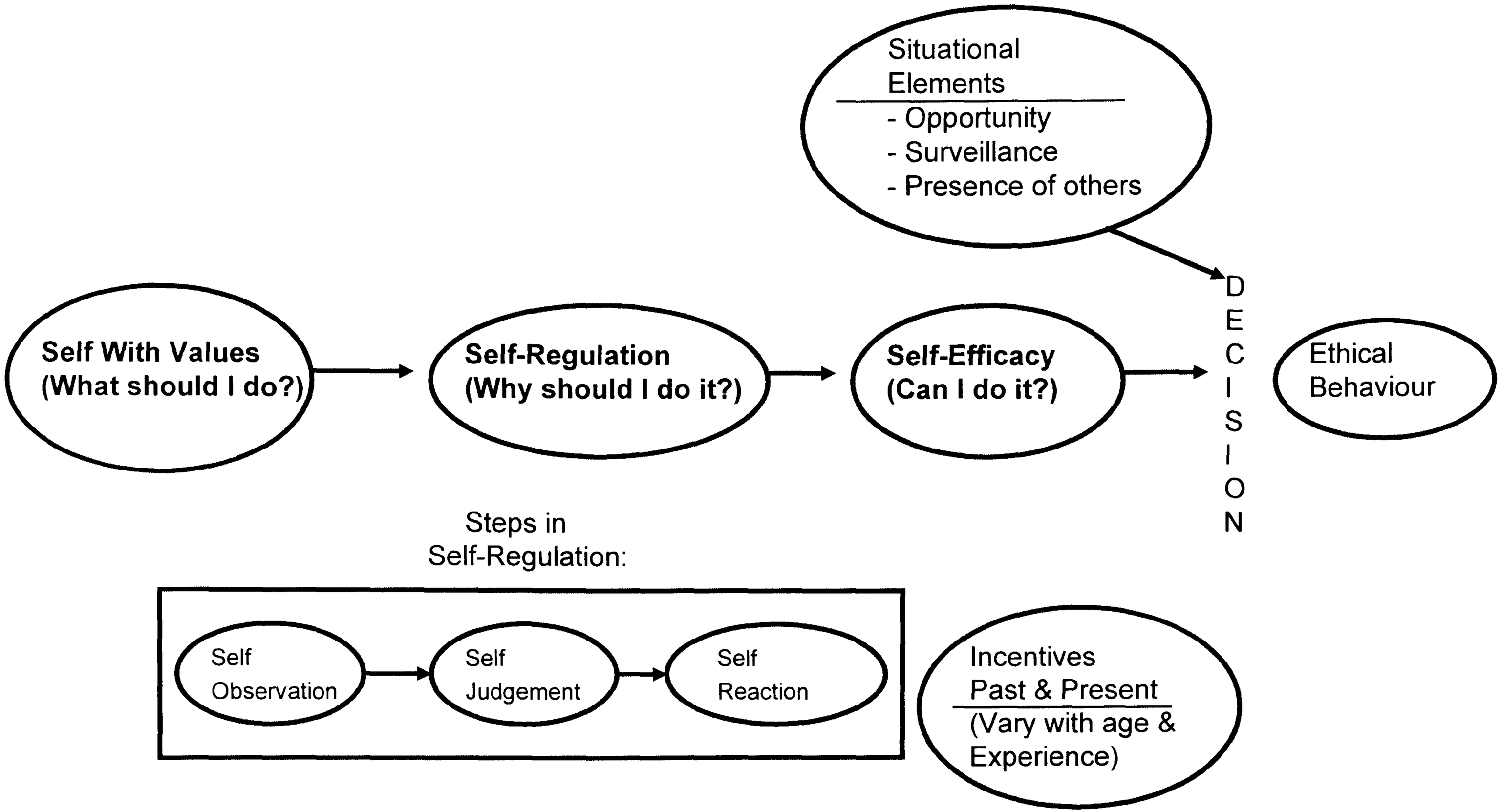
Vitell & Festervand (1987) note that jobs involving external contacts, such as marketing or purchasing, may have more potential for generating ethical dilemmas than jobs which entail only internal contacts. Trevino (1986) observes that the more centrally located a job is within the communications network of the organisation the more likely it is that an "ethical" decision will be made by the person occupying that job position. While such comments indicate the importance of an organisation's control mechanisms as a means of reinforcing "correct" behaviour, or at least behaviour that is perceived as organisationally appropriate, the effects of such control mechanisms is not necessarily a straightforward one (See Hopwood, 1974; Johnson & Gill, 1993).

In addition, what is perceived to be "ethical" or "unethical" may, as Trevino implies, be influenced by an organisation's cultural milieux. Whether a manager consciously thinks of issues in terms of their "ethicality" may also be influenced by whether the organisational culture encourages the open discussion of ethics as part of normal everyday managerial discourse. Bird & Waters (1987; 1989) have drawn attention to the way in which such discussion is discouraged in some organisations (See also Jackall, 1988).



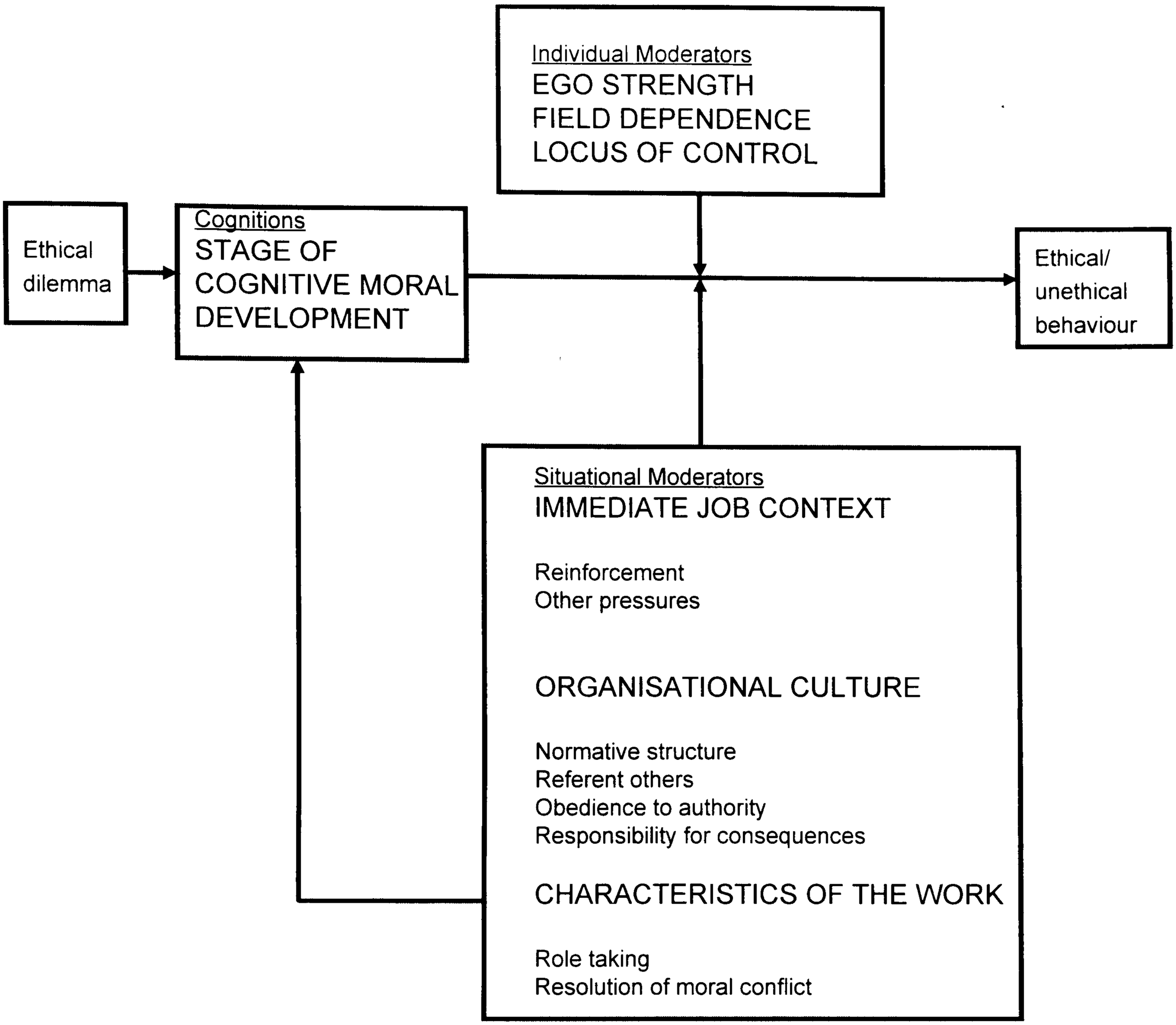

Model of ethical behaviour

*Figure 3* Stead et al (1990: 237)



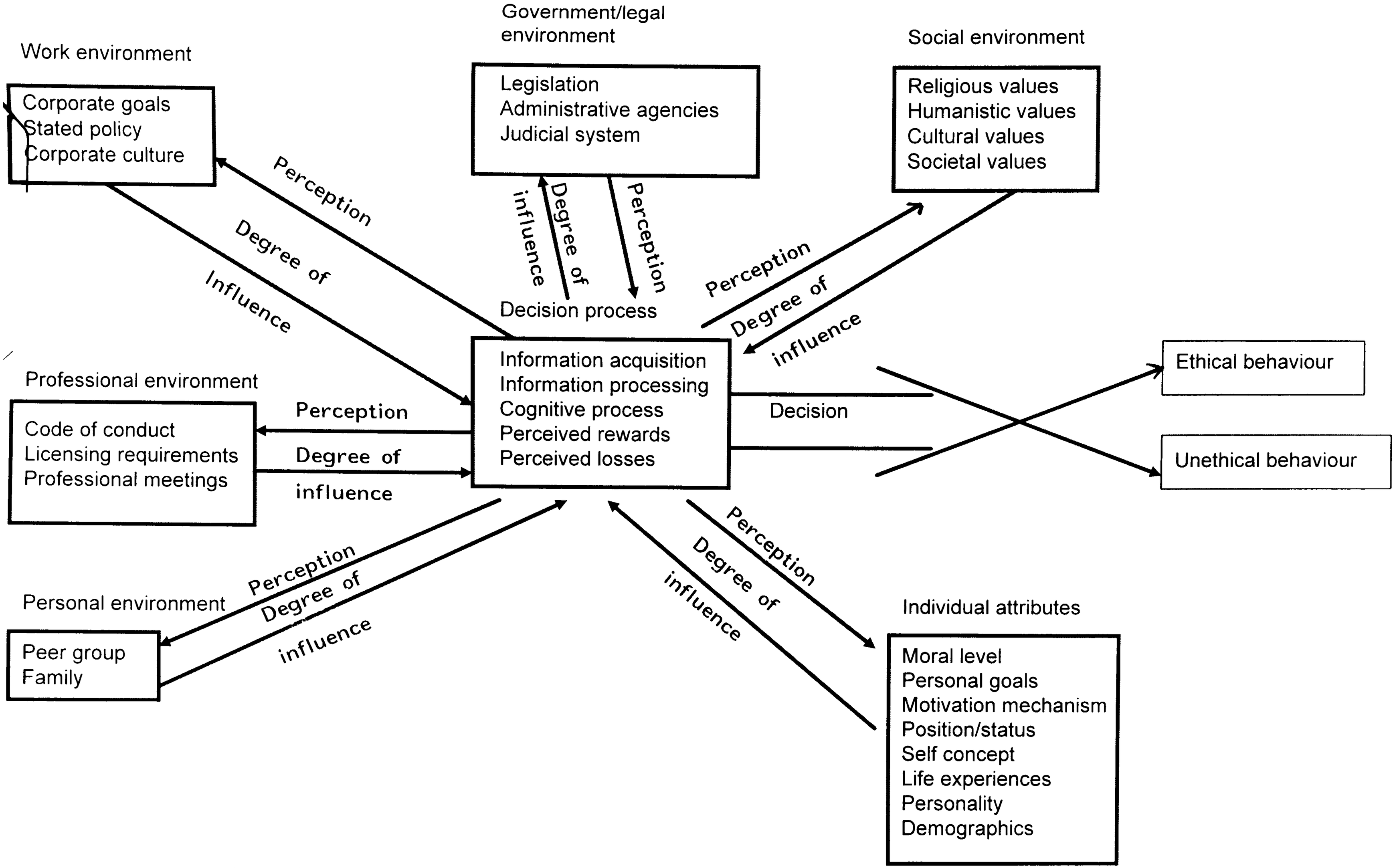

Steps in the process of ethical decision making and ethical behaviour

*Figure 4* Jensen & Wygant (1990:223)




Interactionist model of ethical decision making in organisations

*Figure 5* Trevino (1986: 603)




A behavioural model of ethical/unethical decision making

*Figure 6* : Bommer, Gratto, Gravander, & Tuttle (1987: 266)

## Summary and Discussion

In concluding this chapter it is constructive to draw-out some of the issues which have been identified for further comment and as a means of providing a link with issues which are addressed in the following chapter.

It is apparent that in the closing years of this century business ethics has come to be perceived as of increasing importance to both the business community and within academia. The manner in which the subject area has been both conceptualised and evolved indicate something of both the environmental and polemical and ideological factors which have been influential in its development.

Both the multitude of definitions, and the number of contributing disciplines to the field of knowledge and practice which constitutes business ethics testify to the dynamism and complexity of the subject matter. As an area of theoretical investigation it both transcends and challenges the traditional definitions and boundaries between the contributing academic disciplines. In this respect it is not only inter- and multi-disciplinary, it is also trans-disciplinary (Scott, 1995:149) an issue which becomes more apparent when the subject is located within a broader analysis of the contemporary intellectual climate in Western society - an issue addressed in more detail in chapter six.

There are however some aspects which have already been identified which reflect something of the context within which business ethics has evolved and which reflect the fact that the subject is simultaneously both a product and critique of the business and socio-cultural environment which it investigates.

Firstly, there is the "top-down" nature of the subject. The focus on the "ethics of management" reflects the concern both to legitimate and regulate the role of management as opposed to the shareholder/owner within a free-market economy (Burnham, 1941) and in so doing, to defend the benefits of a free enterprise market economy against both internal and external criticism.[18] In this respect, one important role of business ethics has been in providing an ideological legitimation of the free enterprise economy, and the role of the manager within it.

Secondly, and related to the previous observation, one also has the corollary concern with the "management of ethics", the desire to educate; train; and modify both the behaviour, values, and beliefs of both management and other organisational actors through the institutionalisation of ethics within the workplace (e.g. Center for Business Ethics, 1986, 1992; Weiss, 1986; Sims, 1991). It is here that one can discern both the symbolic and ideological importance of the different "levels of analysis" identified within the business ethics literature. The identification and separation of a:

"systemic ethics", "organisational ethics", and the "ethics of the person", provide both a heuristic mechanism by which to address the inherent complexity of the subject in a more manageable form, but by doing so, also displays the influence of the political-economic context within which business ethics has been situated and has developed historically. Just as MacIntyre (1966, 1981) contends that the content and focus of moral philosophy is a historically generated social product, then so too in the case of business ethics.

The "levels of analysis" reflect the concerns to simultaneously legitimate, guide, and manage, but also to critically evaluate and modify the workings of the market economic system.[19] This has become increasingly complex in recent years reflecting both changes in the global economy, and the realization that Western business practices and beliefs no longer enjoy a hegemonic role in the world economy, and as the internal workings of Western economies have come under more internal criticism due to their perceived shortcomings. While such developments have acted to increase the interest in business ethics as an area of academic study and practical application, it has also been reflected in the acknowledgement of the increased complexity of business ethics per se.[20]

The increased concern with contextualist approaches towards business ethics, reflects three interrelated developments. Firstly, the increased complexity of the subject area, and the argument that business ethics is a social science rather than a purely philosophic subject (Trevino, 1986). Secondly, the concerns generated by an increasing degree of public doubt regarding the effects of business activity upon the community, and the ability of business to be self-regulating and socially responsible. Thirdly, the concerns of the business community and management to both legitimate the role of the market economy as a major means of generating material well-being within society, and, as a means of achieving this, to further enhance their means of facilitating both increased control and adaptability within the workplace, and increased commitment, motivation, and loyalty among organisational members.

It is in this respect that it is important to view the increased emphasis upon contextual approaches towards business ethics in a context which locates them as occurring simultaneously with other developments within both academia and business activity. The increased concern with social scientific approaches towards business ethics reflects the increasingly acknowledgement within other areas of social science, particularly sociology, organisational behaviour, and management studies, of the need to develop more complex approaches to the understanding of both organisations as social institutions and the behaviour exhibited by those individuals situated within them. It also reflects growing realization on the part of managers that traditional - functionalist - approaches to both the analysis of, and hence the management and control of organisations and their members was failing to achieve the desired results.

It is within such a context that one can locate business ethics, but not simply as an academic "field" as identified by De George (1986) and McHugh (1988), although the field is still in the process of being delineated and defined. This is illustrated by the concern over whether the subject constitutes an academic discipline (Enderle, 1996), or is merely an intellectual arena where the established disciplines coalesce uneasily. Rather, both the parameters and composition of the "field" need to be understood in relation to the changing concerns and activities of the business community.[21]

Definitions of business ethics cited earlier refer to the subject area as one of "applied ethics", reflecting the interrelationships existing between philosophical knowledge and business practice. The argument developed here is that business ethics is not, if it ever was, merely the application of philosophic knowledge to business. The contextual approaches of writers like Trevino (1986); Bommer et al (1987); and Stead et al (1990) illustrate both the increasingly social scientific composition of the subject, and also how the changing focus of the subject has reflected the changing assumptions and perceived needs of the business community.

Such comments are not intended to either dismiss or criticize business ethics practitioners for being ideological defenders or apologists of capitalism. Such as charge would be at best overly-simplistic. It is intended to indicate the need to locate the "field" of business ethics within a broader landscape and account for both its changing intellectual and practical expressions. Part of that changing landscape is the concern of both academics and business practitioners to respond to the perceived increased pace and complexity of change, whether that change be perceived as cultural, technological, economic, or intellectual.

It is no coincidence that the last two decades of this century have not only witnessed an increasing interest in business ethics but also in the concept of organisational culture, and the related concern of culture management. Both concepts reflect not only the academic concern with acknowledging and seeking to comprehend the complexity of the interrelationships existing between individual behaviour and organisational behaviour, but also the concern of management to increase the efficiency with which they control the human resources within the organisation.

Both business ethics and organisational culture appear to focus attention on the relationships between the organisation and the individual - the meso and micro levels of analysis, while paying less overt attention the macro, or systemic level of analysis.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Systemic Ethics | Macro | Systemic |
| Organisational Ethics | Meso | Organisational Culture |
| Ethics of the Person | Micro | The Individual |

It is interesting to conjecture whether such a focus of attention reflects the contradictions confronting the role of market economics in Western societies at this time? While on the one hand the market appears to have triumphed over both its external competitor - socialist economic systems - and its internal detractors and critics in terms of the advocacy and support of free market principles and practices in the policies of both American and British governments, there is concern whether the emphasis upon the mechanisms of the market has been at the expense of community and democratic government (See e.g. Bellah et al, 1985, 1992, Lasch, 1979, 1995; Grey, 1993; Stivers, 1994; Jenkins, 1995). The response to such criticisms has involved a simultaneous concern to both increase productivity and business efficiency to restore public and consumer confidence in the market economy and both restore and improve the relationships between management and employees by seeking to modify the mechanisms of managerial control and how they are presented and perceived by employees.

The following chapter is concerned to clarify and develop these observations through a discussion of organisational culture and its relationship with business ethics. In particular the relationships between the concept of culture management as a mechanism of management control, and the institutionalisation of business ethics will be explored through the examples of corporate codes of ethics and conduct, and the concept of whistleblowing.

## Notes

1. McHugh (1988) observes that while business ethics as a distinct area of discourse and debate originated in America around the beginning of this century, in Britain and Germany such concerns were conducted in the language of political economy.

2. In Europe, such concerns were finding an alternative mode of expression through the writings of sociologists such as Emile Durkheim.

3. For an interesting account of the difference in approaches towards business ethics in the United States and Britain see Epstein, 1976, 1977)

4. For a similar, but slightly different account of the development of business ethics in America, see Epstein (1989).

5. Adair (1980) views such associations as being particularly important within the British context of business ethics.

6. Brady (1988) contends that Kant's views do not tend to receive as fair, or adequate a treatment as the utilitarian approach, although this may also reflect the particular preference, or philosophical bias, of the writer.

7. Such observations raise important questions regarding the nature and content of business education within the context of British management education.

8. See for example, Goodchild (1986), Williams (1986, Schmidt (1986), and Camenisch (1986).

9. Although one can argue that ethical issues and concerns have been subsumed within traditional concerns of the organisational behaviour literature, for example: Human Relations theory; motivation theory; equity theory; job design;and payment systems.

10. Barnett & Karson (1989) in exploring the relationship between gender, methods and results, note that their male respondents tended to focus upon the bottom-line results, while their female respondents expressed more interest in the methods of goal attainment. While such findings support earlier findings reported by Rotter & Portugal (1969) and Baird (1976), work by Derry (1989) questions whether such findings may be "context specific" rather than identifying differences between the genders.

    While this issue is of some importance in the debates concerning the nature of a specifically feminist ethic, it also raises the question of whether specific situational contexts, or a particular organisation's cultural milieux may override moral and behaviourial differences between men and women?

11. Indeed a follow-up survey by Lusk & Oliver (1974) found that the differences between the value systems of both samples was very small.

12. The influence of personal values however may be important in helping to account for situations in which an individual chooses to act contrary to the dominant values within his/her place of employment, for example, in the case of whistleblowing.

13. Researchers have also found that individuals with different decision ideologies vary in terms of how they integrate ethical information, and how they interpret and evaluate their own ethical dilemmas, and how

they judge the moral decisions taken by others. They also differ in terms of their sense of moral obligation and responsibility to others (Forsyth et al, 1988).

14. It is interesting to note that Jensen & Wygant, in drawing attention to the need to understand the nature, or "self" of the individual draw attention to an issue which is of great contemporary significance to researchers from a number of perspectives, such as feminism (e.g. Gilligan, 1982; Held, 1993; Hekman, 1995), and postmodernists (Rose, 1989; Bauman, 1990, 1992; Miller, 1993), as well as writers adopting a more critical perspective (e.g. Benhabib, 1992; Townley, 1994; Hall & Du Gay, 1996).

15. A problem which may then arise for such an individual is that others perceive the decision and subsequent action as reflecting the ethical values or standards of the individual, which may not be the case.

    This may also help to account for the fact that a number of studies have reported that respondents felt themselves to be more ethical than their peers (See e.g. Newstrom & Ruch, 1975; Brennar & Molander, 1976; Posner & Schmidt, 1987; Vitell & Festervand, 1987; Izraeli, 1988; and McDonald & Zepp, 1989), although it is also possible that what was being recorded was the respondent's espoused values, rather their values-in-use.

16. It is not clear whether such organisational values refer to the stated, formal values of an organisation, or the values-in-use, although one suspects the latter.

17. Toffler's Tough Choices: Managers Talk Ethics, (1986) provides a rare example where managers talk openly about how they have confronted ethical dilemmas within the workplace and how they sought to resolve the situation.

18. Historically the external challenge, highlighted in some American texts, has been the perceived appeal of the centralised "command" state economy of the erstwhile Soviet Union.

19. This is also illustrated in the format and content of some business ethics textbooks, where apart from dealing relatively briefly with various ethical theories, the main structure and content of the book is focused around specific areas of concern and ethical application. The complexity and integrative nature of the subject is sub-divided into manageable areas of study. While such a structure often reflects the fact that the book has been deliberately constructed as a course textbook, both the structure and content reflect existing assumptions regarding the role of business and the concerns of management.

20. Two examples which illustrate this are, firstly the increased interest in international business ethics (See e.g. Donaldson, 1989; De George, 1993, 1994), and secondly, reflecting the increased impact of information technology, computer ethics (See e.g. Dunlop & Kling (eds) 1993; Lyon, 1994; Mason, Mason, & Culnan, 1995).

21. Note for example the emergence of corporate governance in recent years as an increasingly important topic of both academic and business concern.

# Chapter Two
# Business Ethics and Organisational Culture: Two Expressions of Uncertainty

## Introduction

Chapter one was concerned to identify the historical and academic context within which business ethics is evolving as a product of both theoretical discourse and practical business concerns. In this chapter the concern is to develop the analysis more thoroughly by considering the relationships between business ethics and organisational culture.

Both phenomena reflect the increasing recognition of the complexity of the social world. Within the business ethics literature this is reflected in the concern to develop contextualist models which seek to account for the ethicality or otherwise of individual behaviour. With regard to organisational culture the literature reflects not only a variety of theoretical approaches but also the tensions existing between the desire to analyze and understand the complexity of organisational life, and the concern to influence, manage, and change the culture of the organisation as a means of improving organisational efficiency, profitability, and responsiveness to environmental change. In this respect, both concepts are products of the broader sociocultural and economic environment within which they are situated.

While the disciplinary boundaries between the two literatures is necessarily blurred, the initial focus will be upon identifying the various approaches to the study of organisational culture, while at the same time indicating where concerns within that literature are also reflected within the business ethics literature. Later, in considering the possibility of culture management the two literatures will be brought together through a consideration of the contemporary significance of corporate codes of ethics and the act of whistleblowing.

## Organisational Culture and Corporate Culture

The literature on organisational culture is considerable and still expanding. Observations that organisational culture is an "elusive and fuzzy concept" (Sathe, 1983), and that few concepts in organisational theory have "as many and competing definitions" (Barney, 1986) draw attention to both the size of the literature and the complexity of the concept.

While definitions are plentiful, perhaps the most oft-quoted one is provided by Schein (1985),

> a pattern of basic assumptions - invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external and internal integration - that has worked well enough to be considered

> valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (1985:9)

However, definitions may well provide a false sense of certainty upon an area of knowledge that is both complex and contested in that they may obscure as much as they enlighten. It is not always made clear, for example, which theoretical perspective is being adopted by the writer. Likewise, quite how one distinguishes between the study of organisational culture and the study of organisational power and politics is not readily apparent (Riley, 1983; Lucas, 1987). As Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) observes, the concept can be something of an "umbrella concept" (1992:160) in that a great many organisational studies can be located under its banner if desired. It is also, like business ethics, an interdisciplinary concept, drawing ideas from anthropology, sociology, psychology, social psychology, systems theory, and psychotherapy (Schein, 1985:313), and increasingly from management studies. In some respects the very concept "organisational culture" is a contemporary metaphor for the complexity of modern organisations[1], although Alvesson in indicating the need to consider "the metaphor behind the metaphor" (1993:16) indicates the need to avoid being uncritically seduced by both its contemporary popularity and breadth of application.

There is a need to be both aware of the various disciplinary and theoretical approaches adopted by writers on the subject, and the reasons for its contemporary appeal to both managers and academics. An initial appreciation of the various theoretical approaches to the study of organisational culture can be accessed through the work of Allaire & Firsirotu (1984).

It is generally acknowledged that the literature concerned with organisational culture has drawn upon the earlier anthropological concern with the subject. Allaire & Firsiotu (1984) acknowledge this by identifying the various schools of thought within cultural anthropology as a means of clarifying the various theories of culture available, and then relating those to the literature concerned with organisational culture.

Initially they distinguish between those writers who view culture as being an integral part of the social system, adopting a "sociocultural system" perspective, and those who view culture as being essentially concerned with "ideas".

In developing the sociocultural system perspective, they distinguish four different schools of thought, dividing them into those having either a synchronic or diachronic approach. The synchronic approaches are those of functionalism (e.g. Malinowski, 1944) and functional structuralism (e.g. Radcliffe-Browne, 1952), both being concerned with studying a given culture at a particular point of time and location. In contrast, the diachronic perspective of the historical-diffusionist (e.g. Benedict, 1934), and the

ecological-adaptionist schools (e.g. White, 1973) are concerned to take account of the temporal dimension, identifying the processes by which particular cultures change and develop.

Similarly, with regard to the ideational approaches to culture, four approaches are identified. The cognitive, or ethnographic, school views culture as a system of knowledge - learned standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting (e.g. Goodenough, 1971). The structuralist school views culture as consisting of shared symbolic systems which are the cumulative products of the mind, reflecting unconscious processes of thought.

The third approach, mutual equivalence (e.g. Wallace, 1970) sees culture as comprising a set of standardised cognitive processes which create a general framework for the prediction of behaviour, while the fourth approach is the interpretive (e.g. Geertz, 1973) where culture is a shared system of meanings and symbols. In this last case, culture is located in the meanings and thoughts created and shared by actors in a social setting.

While the precise distinctions between such approaches to the study of anthropology may be of considerable importance to academics operating within that field of knowledge, their relevance here lies in the manner in which they have influenced approaches to the study of organisations.

For example, Malinowski's need-grounded theory of culture finds expression in the Human Relations and Neo-Human Relations writings of Mayo (1949); Roethlisberger & Dickson (1939); Maslow (1954) and McGregor (1960). Likewise the Structural-Functionalism of Radcliffe-Browne is reflected in the writings of Talcott Parsons (1960) and Selznick (1957) where organisations are perceived to have both "goals" and "needs" deriving from their functional interaction with their environment.

One important aspect of such approaches is that the culture of the organisation is viewed as reflecting the values and beliefs of the broader social culture within which it is located. The extent to which the culture of a given organisation can be opposed to, or differ from that of its parent culture is problematic given that some degree of cultural harmony or integration is deemed necessary for the legitimation of the organisation's goals and activities.[2] What such an approach does not acknowledge is the question of the relationship between the organisation and the sociocultural community within which it is located. The implication is that it is the broader cultural context which is the determining factor in influencing the articulation of the organisation's actions. Such an approach underestimates the ability of business organisations, both individually and collectively, to influence the cultural environment within which they operate.[3]

To some extent such a criticism is reflected in the organisational literature by contingency theory, (e.g. Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Burns & Stalker,

1961; Child, 1972) which reflects the views of the Ecological-Adaptionist school. In this case the cultural values of society are only one of a number of potential influences upon organisational behaviour. Such an approach would appear to grant a greater degree of autonomy and discretion to the articulation of organisational culture and behaviour although the precise nature of the relationship is problematic.[4]

A recurring concern of the sociocultural systems approaches to organisational culture is the extent to which it is possible for organisations to create a cultural milieux different from that of the wider society.[5] As well as raising questions regarding the viability of viewing organisations as "closed systems", it also identifies three issues of concern for both the study of organisational culture and business ethics.

Firstly, there is the question of the very "content" of the broader sociocultural milieux within which a given business organisation may be located, and the nature of both its historical development and the manner of its contemporary articulation. Of particular relevance here are the concerns of writers regarding the nature of Western industrial society and the extent to which industrial and commercial values have come to predominate.[6] In this respect, the extent to which the organisational culture literature focuses upon the attributes and expressions of <u>individual</u> organisational cultures is worthy of note. It is almost as if the literature views the broader cultural milieux as a "given" and relatively unproblematic.[7] Morey & Luthans (1985) indicate the need to understand the environmental context within which individual organisational cultures are located when observing that,

> All organisations "have" culture in the sense that they are embedded in specific societal cultures and are part of them. Organisations are important cultural artifacts themselves - organisations are both product and producer of culture, but they are not independent entities.
>
> (1985:221)[8]

Secondly, and related to this, there is the need to locate the very study of organisational culture within an analysis of the contemporary nature of Western society, particularly with regard to the changing concerns of business and management. Thirdly, there is the question of the relationship of the individual actor to his or her organisation's cultural milieux. To what extent is an individual's behaviour and attitudes influenced and constrained by their organisation's culture?[9]

With regard to the ideational view of culture Allaire & Firsirotu undertake a similar approach of matching such views of culture to writers on organisations. The additional issue arising here is the extent to which a misalignment between an organisation's culture and its structures, goals and internal processes can occur as a result of external and/or internal

factors? (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984:203). The focus here is not only the distinction between structural and ideational aspects of organisational culture, and the relationships between them, but also upon the internal dimensions of the cultural milieux of the organisation.

The cognitive approach to culture finds expression in the organisational literature in two forms: the concern with organisational climate (e.g. Schneider, 1975; Victor & Cullen, 1987, 1988; Cullen et al, 1989), and the concept of organisational learning (e.g. Argyris & Schon, 1978; Argyris, 1990; Senge, 1990).[10]

The mutual-equivalence approach of Wallace (1970), as developed by Weick (1979) provides a somewhat different view of organisational culture. According to this approach, individuals become involved in the creation and maintenance of organisations, not because they have common goals, but because it suits their personal needs and interests. The intensity of their identification with, and involvement with an organisation will vary depending upon how the activities of the organisation are viewed in relation to their own aspirations and objectives.

Such an approach is in sharp contrast to functionalist approaches to organisational culture which emphasize the shared values, harmony, and cooperative nature of the culture. The imagery here is of a much more conflictual and contested cultural milieux, one which, as Lucas (1987) contends, calls for a political-cultural analysis of organisations, reflecting the belief that,

> culture emerges out of interactions between interest groups as they define the meaning of, and act upon, specific organisational issues such as budgets, strategic plans, or manpower policies. Organisational culture is seen - as the sum of solutions to organisational contradictions derived from the differences between interest group activities and perceptions regarding such issues.
>
> (1987:145)

That organisational politics are not devoid of ethical connotations is reflected in the writings of Cavanagh et al (1981) and Velasquez et al (1983), reflecting the belief that there should be moral guidelines and principles regarding the manner in which organisational politics are expressed within the cultural context of the organisation.[11]

In turn, the symbolic school of culture (Geertz, 1973, 1983) is represented in the organisational literature by both the Action and Institutional schools of thought. The latter approach, represented by the work of such writers as Selznick (1957), Pettigrew (1979), Handy (1978) and Schein (1985) present

a view of an organisation and its culture being a unique conjunction of its origins, history, sociocultural context, technology, and leadership.

The role of leadership is for some writers on organisational culture of particular importance (e.g. Schein, 1983, 1985). In contrast, writers adopting an Action approach to organisations, such as Silverman (1970) place more emphasis upon the ongoing creation of organisational reality, and the ability of actors to impose their definitions of reality upon others,

> present participants continually shape and reshape the pattern of expectations by means of their actions - The pattern of interaction which emerges is further shaped by the perceived ability of certain actors to impose a particular definition of the situation upon others, who may feel forced to accept (with varying degrees of enthusiasm) this view of the organisation and their role in it.
>
> (1970:196)

Such a perspective indicates the need to adopt a dialectical approach to the study of organisational culture. One which acknowledges the contradictions arising from the various objectives, aspirations, activities, and expectations of the individual actor as he/she both reacts to, and seeks to influence the cultural milieux within which they are located.

The ostensibly opposing focus of the Institutional and Action approaches to the study of organisational behaviour illustrates an inherent tension within the literature dealing with organisational culture, one which is manifested in much of the social science literature, the nature of the relationship between the individual and the social collectivity. The business ethics literature displays a similar concern with regard to the ethics of the person and the concern with the moral status of the corporation - the question of whether it is reasonable to think of a business organisation as being a "moral person".[12]

Another, influential article which identifies the various approaches to studying organisational culture is Smircich (1983a). In identifying five different approaches to the study of organisational culture she divides them into two basic approaches - those viewing it as an "organisational variable" and those seeing it as a "root metaphor" for understanding organisations. She maintains that those adopting the first approach tend to be concerned with the problem of shaping or moulding the internal culture of an organisation, and hence, by implication, how to approach the task of changing and "managing" the culture.

## The Management of Culture

The question of whether it is possible to "manage" the organisational culture is a contentious one. It reflects not only differing theoretical approaches to the subject, but also differing beliefs regarding the relationship between academia and business. It is perhaps something of an understatement to observe that opinion is divided on the subject.

What is apparent from the literature on the subject is that from the early nineteen-eighties onwards there has been a considerable literature concerned with informing readers how to manage and change the culture of an organisation. For example, Pascale & Athos (1981); Deal & Kennedy (1982); Peters & Waterman (1982); Tichy (1982); Kilmann et al (1986); Coulson-Thomas (1992); and Drennan (1992). The underlying rationale for such a concern has been the contention that organisational culture is an important factor for the success or failure of business organisations. It not only affects the process of organisational change - an increasingly important organisational ability in the contemporary business environment[13] - but is also viewed as an important factor influencing organisational productivity, efficiency, and profitability. In this respect, it is also seen as affecting both the development and implementation, and ultimate success of, corporate strategy.[14]

Observing that much of organisational theory is concerned with "the problem of social order" (1983a:341) Smircich notes that it is not surprising that both managers and academics have shown increasing interest in both the concept of organisational culture and its potential management. Academically it reflects the concern to delve deeper into the socio-psychological processes of organisational life and to challenge the heuristic merits of disciplinary-based concepts and models. From the point of view of the business practitioner it reflects the gradual realization that the more traditional assumptions regarding the nature of organisations, and the mechanisms by which to both motivate and control employees are increasingly inappropriate in a period which appears to require both increased flexibility and commitment from all levels of the organisational membership. It is not coincidental that managerial interest in organisational culture appears to occur at the same time as there is additional concern for increases in organisational productivity, efficiency, profitability, and flexibility. If Taylor's Scientific Management appeared to be the solution to problems of industrial relations and competitiveness for the business community in the first two decades of this century, the successful management of organisational culture is offered as a partial solution to similar problems confronting business in the closing two decades. Both approaches appear to provide the means of increasing productivity and competitiveness, whilst simultaneously acting to restore cooperation and harmony to the workplace.[15]

It is not surprising that there is a considerable difference of opinion concerning the "manageability" of culture. For some, such as Schein (1985), Louis (1985), Fitzgerald (1988) and Meek (1988) organisational culture is simply too vast and complex a subject to allow for it to be amenable to managerial direction and control. The best that one can hope to achieve by such attempts is to change "behaviour", the first of Schein's three levels of cultural analysis (1985:14). In such circumstances, the best that managers may achieve is "compliance" as opposed to employee commitment and identification with management's wishes. This was indicated by Ogbonna & Wilkinson (1988, 1990) in observing the behaviour of checkout personnel in a supermarket. After training, the operatives behaved according to how they perceived management required them to in the realization that not to do so would incur sanctions.

To the extent that such behaviour is a form of public performance, it prompts questions concerning alternative interpretations to the notion of "managing culture".[16] Conventionally, the notion of managing organisational culture has reflected the belief that such activities are the legitimate preserve and responsibility of management. As such, this reflects a traditional top-down approach to both understanding and controlling organisational activity. Organisational culture becomes merely one more organisational variable for management to initially analyze and comprehend and then change and manipulate as required.

The "discovery" of organisational culture by management during the nineteen-eighties served a number of functions. Firstly, it provided an explanation for the relative lack of success of more traditional mechanisms of managerial control. Secondly, as an area of organisational knowledge and practice to be acquired by managers it strengthened claims to managerial expertise and authority. Thirdly, the complexity of the phenomenon offered the prospect of developing both more indirect, but also more acceptable forms of control over organisational employees.

In reality, such an approach reflects traditional managerial assumptions regarding the nature of organisations and is a form of self-delusion (Anthony, 1990). The study by Ackroyd & Crowdy (1990) provides a good example of such managerial delusion with regard to the operations of an English slaughterhouse. In this case the managerial belief that the organisation was well-managed was not the result of managerial skill, but rather the unintended consequence of the subcultural values and objectives of the operatives coinciding with those of management for high levels of productivity. Viewed from this perspective, the processes by which the cultural milieux of an organisation develops is similar to that described by Weick (1979), an informal process of negotiation, bargaining, and competition in which managers at best influence, or assist the process of cultural formation. They do not determine it.[17]

Before leaving the explicit consideration of organisational culture and the possibility of its management it is important to draw attention to certain issues. Firstly, although much of the literature appears to focus upon the meso level of analysis - the interactions between the individual and the organisation - it is important to consider the relationship between the meso and macro levels of analysis. Just as Morey & Luthans (1985) observe that organisations are themselves, cultural artifacts, so too is the literature relating to organisational culture and culture management. It is important to locate both the literature and the means by which cultural analysis and culture management is enacted in practice within business organisations within a broader analysis of the sociocultural and economic milieux within which it has developed. In this respect, the fact that the concern with organisational culture and the means for enabling its management and change have occurred during a period of considerable change and uncertainty within the business community and a concomitant concern to increase levels of productivity and competitiveness, is not coincidental. Secondly, it is noticeable that the nineteen-eighties have also witnessed a change in both terminology and focus with regard to employee-management relations. The increasing prominence given to Human Resource Management and the associated techniques of recruitment and selection, and training and development reflects the concern by employers and management to develop practical techniques for achieving both improved organisational efficiency and flexibility, while also seeking to achieve higher levels of employee motivation, commitment and loyalty to the organisation.[18] In this respect, Human Resource Management provides a variety of techniques to both facilitate and legitimate cultural change within organisations.

Thirdly, the concern with culture management is, as indicated earlier, ideological in the sense that not only does it re-emphasize the importance of the work ethic, but it does so within the context of a free market economic system. By promoting the identification of the individual with both the employing organisation, the goods and services produced, and the performance of the organisation in the marketplace (See e.g. Silver, 1987; du Gay 1991; du Gay & Salaman, 1992) the objective is to not only increase levels of motivation and effort, but also to engender a more materialistic conception of self-identity.

Fourthly, and deriving from the previous observations, it is important to note that attempts at managing the culture of an organisation, and also the practice of Human Resource Management, raise important ethical issues for consideration.[19]

## Organisational Culture: Ordering Complexity

The contemporary concern with organisational culture can be viewed as a recognition of the complexity of modern society. It symbolizes the contradictory desire to both acknowledge the complexity of the

phenomenon and the desire to comprehend and manage that complexity. This is particularly true with regard to the role and nature of the business organisation, and in this respect the concern with "managing corporate culture" is especially important. It symbolizes the concern to both integrate and incorporate the individual's values, beliefs, and aspirations within an ideological framework which legitimates managerial authority and reinforces belief in the benefits accruing from support and acceptance of the free market system. It is in this respect that the concern to "manage organisational culture" has both ideological and ethical implications.

In concluding their paper Allaire & Firsirotu contend that an organisation has three interrelated components: a sociostructural system, a cultural system, and individual actors. In formulating an integrating of the various approaches to the study of organisational culture which they reviewed in their paper, they contend that they provide a conceptual framework which views organisational culture as being,

> a particularistic system of symbols shaped by ambient society and the organisation's history, leadership and contingencies, differentially shared, used and modified by actors in the course of acting and making sense out of organisational events.
>
> (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984:216)

Such an approach reflects a concern to both acknowledge the interrelationships existing between the different levels of analysis: macro, meso, and micro, and the importance and complexity of an organisation's cultural milieux for influencing individual behaviour and beliefs.

While such an observation may help to account for the contemporary popularity of attempts to "manage" the culture of an organisation, it is also necessary to acknowledge the importance of the sociocultural and economic context within which such concerns are manifested as this has influenced the manner in which they are expressed and dealt with within the organisational culture literature.
One example of this is provided by the various writings of Meyerson and Martin (e.g. Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Meyerson, 1991; Martin, 1992) where they are concerned to identify differing approaches or paradigms for the study of organisational culture: Integration; Differentiation; and Ambiguity.[20]

The Integration paradigm epitomizes approaches which view organisational culture as that which is

> shared and/or unique to a given organisation or group
> (Meyerson & Martin, 1987:624)

From this perspective, culture is essentially an integrating mechanism.[21] The overall emphasis of this paradigm is upon harmony and consensus, combined with a tendency to emphasize the importance of leadership as an important source of culture creation, (See e.g. Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Schein, 1985; Sherwood, 1988).[22]

Given the overall image that is conveyed by this paradigm, it is not surprising that this approach to organisational culture has been closely associated with the idea that by "managing" an organisation's culture, management can achieve increased control while at the same time achieving improved employee commitment and motivation, resulting in increases to organisational efficiency, effectiveness and competitiveness, thereby contributing to improvements in a corporation's strategic performance. A large number of books and articles have been concerned to convey this message to managers. [23]

While the focus of concern of the Integration paradigm is primarily with the organisation, i.e. the internal formulation of an organisation's culture, it is necessary to locate such concerns within a more "open systems" perspective which views organisational culture as being formed by factors both internal and external to the organisation. In this respect, the political-economic milieux of the late nineteen seventies and eighties, reflecting the increased concern for organisational competitiveness, and the extolling of the benefits of privatisation and the free market are particularly important. Du Gay & Salaman (1992) illustrate this by drawing attention to the way in which management have sought to increase employee motivation and identification with the organisation and the provision of goods and services by seeking to strengthen the ties between employee and customer.

The second paradigm, the Differentiation paradigm, differs in significant ways from the first in that it more readily acknowledges the complexity of an organisation's cultural milieux by recognising that it contains a variety of values, beliefs, and attitudes, and that they are not necessarily supportive and complimentary of each other. Instead of the image of monolithic, cooperative cultures, Martin & Siehl contend that the majority of organisational cultures,

> are composed of various interlocking, nested, sometimes conflicting subcultures.
>
> (1983:53)

This approach recognizes that an organisation's cultural milieux will reflect the broader cultural influences of society and as such may contain elements of occupational, racial, class, regional, and gender-based cultures (See e.g. Gregory, 1983; Cox, 1991).

While such an approach is arguably more true-to-life than the image provided by the Integration paradigm it is not necessarily clear how such subcultures interact with each other within an organisational context. Meyerson & Martin suggest that organisations might be best viewed as a cultural "nexus" where societal "feeder" cultures come together" (1987:631) and that an individual may be a member of,

> several overlapping, nested subcultures, some of which hold opposing views.
>
> (1987:631)

How an individual might reconcile such a potentially conflict-prone situation illustrates both the complexity inherent in an organisation's cultural milieux and the tension existing between the organisation, viewed as a sociocultural collectivity, and the individual, seen as an autonomous self-directed actor (Golden, 1992).

In observing that organisations are often arenas for dispute and conflict Meek (1988) both draws attention to the complex and contradictory nature of organisational culture and illustrates the need for caution in accepting the argument advanced by some writers that Human Resource Management techniques provide a variety of means by which management can both facilitate organisational change and reduce conflict within an organisation. [24] In this respect, writers adopting the Differentiation paradigm throw considerable doubt on the notion that management control and manipulation of the organisation's culture can be achieved simply through the application of Human Resource Management techniques such as recruitment and selection procedures, manipulation of the reward and control system, or through training and development programmes.[25] Meek (1988) emphasizes this point in observing that, although one can perceive the culture of the modern organisation as a form of social control,

> It is not a form of social control created and manipulated by management, but a process in which management, workers and the community at large participate alike.
>
> (1988:462)

Here again, one can see an acknowledgement of both the complexity of organisational culture, and a recognition that it should not be viewed as a "closed system" but rather something which is influenced by the wider sociocultural milieux within which it is located. One of the weaknesses of the literature concerned with organisation culture is that while seeking to contextualise the individual within the cultural "web" or milieux of the organisation, there does not appear to be much concern to contextualise the interest in organisational culture, and its "management", as itself constituting a cultural artifact which needs to be accounted for.[26] The

argument advanced here is that the three-paradigm approach to the analysis of organisational culture presented by Meyerson and Martin provides a symbolical representation of this.

In presenting their third paradigm - Ambiguity - Meyerson & Martin define it as that which is,

> unclear, inexplicable, and perhaps capable of two or more meanings
>
> (1987:625)

In a second, and later paper (Martin & Meyerson, 1988) they elaborate on this by distinguishing between three types of ambiguity: uncertainty, contradiction, and confusion. [27]

Paradigm 1 (Integration) they contend, denies the presence of ambiguity in that it emphasizes the importance of cultural consensus, cooperation, and harmony. Paradigm 2 (Differentiation) while acknowledging the presence of ambiguity, limits its importance by contending that each subculture displays internal harmony, and that ambiguity is found only at the "interstices among the subcultures" (1988:633). Such a situation, they suggest, reduces the amount of ambiguity apparent to organisational members. In addition, this may be further reduced through the process of "loose couplings" (Weick, 1976) which has the effect of reducing the amount of ambiguous information which becomes available to the various organisational sub-units.

Paradigm 3 (Ambiguity) however, differs from the other two in that it acknowledges ambiguity and accepts it as an integral component of organisational reality.

> An ambiguity paradigm view of culture, then, would have no universally shared, integrating set of values, save one: an awareness of ambiguity itself.
>
> (1988:117)

The authors suggest that the study of organisational culture might benefit from making use of all three paradigms simultaneously, that is, studying the cultural milieux from all three paradigmatic perspectives in order to achieve a more complete understanding of the culture, thereby achieving a deeper and more detailed understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon.[28]

Such a suggestion, while acknowledging the complexity of organisational culture, also symbolizes the contradictory nature of the concept and its contemporary relevance and appeal to organisational management. While on the one hand the phenomenon of organisational culture recognises the complexity inherent in organisational processes, it also implies that the complexity can be unravelled and at least partially understood through the

various techniques of cultural analysis. It is not surprising therefore that the concept has also been readily accepted by writers and researchers operating within a managerialist perspective as providing an additional means by which behaviour and belief systems can be modified by managerial interventions concerned to effect changes to the cultural milieux of the organisation.[29]

What is perhaps surprising is that the literature on organisational culture appears to make such a sharp distinction between those concerned with the study of organisational culture and those concerned with its management and change. It is as if one can readily distinguish between those concerned with the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake, and those who wish to utilise it for more materialist purposes. While it is not suggested that such a distinction is entirely mistaken, it is contended that the sharpness with which writers such as Smircich (1983a) distinguish between the two, ostensibly opposing approaches, is illusionary. It neglects to recognize the extent to which knowledge and information, whether academic or otherwise, has increasingly become a commodity in contemporary society. It also fails to acknowledge that the concept "organisational culture" is itself a cultural artifact which needs to be accounted for within a broader theoretical framework than that of organisational analysis.

The very concept of "organisational culture" is an acknowledgement of both the uncertainty and complexity of contemporary organisational analysis. In addition it symbolizes the acknowledgement that more traditional forms of organisational control, as practised by management, have been found wanting, in that they have failed to deliver the hoped for improvements in both the level of organisational performance and employee commitment and motivation. It is in this respect that one can discern the contemporary interest in certain forms of business ethics as providing an additional mechanism of both increasing employee commitment to the organisation and, in addition, legitimating the role and function of the free market within contemporary society.

Both the concepts of organisational culture and business ethics symbolize contemporary uncertainty regarding both the means by which organisational behaviour - by both individuals and collectivities - can be understood and be made liable to more effective forms of control and management. That the two concepts are inextricably intertwined, even although they constitute two quite distinct areas of knowledge in the academic literature, can be seen by exploring the contemporary interrelationships between organisational culture, business ethics, and the concern with organisational control.

## Organisational Culture and Business Ethics

Business ethics and organisational culture have a close, but somewhat confusing relationship. In part, this reflects the variety of approaches which

have been adopted towards the two concepts. For example, while Drake & Drake observe that,

> The corporate culture literature is relatively silent on morality - the literature cites few ethical heroes and there seems to be a pervasive assumption that managers will not require employees to engage in unethical or immoral acts.
>
> (1988:113)

Schein contends that,

> What is ethical is, in the first instance, an aspect of culture, so that if we assume the operation of several cultures within an organisation, we can assume that there may be several bases for judging what is ethical.
>
> (1985:40)

While Drake & Drake's article appears to distinguish between the two concepts, Schein acknowledges their interrelationship.[30] Considering that "values" are normally viewed as being an inherent aspect of organisational culture, the creation of two distinct literatures relating to business ethics and organisational culture might itself be a worthy topic of research. Serpa contends that values are the "core of organisational culture" (1985:426) suggesting that the two fields of knowledge are inextricably interlinked. The contention here is that the two are indeed interrelated while acknowledging that it is the nature of this that is problematic and subject to various interpretations.

Some writers in the field of business ethics appear to reinforce the apparent distinction between the two areas of investigation when they speak of the desirability of organisations having "weak cultures" and "strong ethics" (McCoy, 1985; Pastin, 1988; Carmichael & Drummond, 1989). One weakness of such accounts is that it is not always clear how they theorize the concept of organisational culture. In addition, even where they distinguish between the two concepts, the very act of distinguishing between them is an acknowledgement of their interrelationship. There is also, however, the suspicion that such writers are implicitly assuming a unitary culture for the organisation, and one that expresses managerialist values. The implication being that the separation of a "weak culture" from "strong ethics" is something which can, and should be, determined by management.

In part, such a call for a "weak" culture is a remonstration against the presumed advantage to management of having a "strong" culture as a means of improving overall performance and control. The utility of such a concept has been challenged by a number of writers (Shrivasta, 1985;

Barney, 1986; Drake & Drake, 1988) especially in the context of the need to encourage the development of adaptive organisations.[31]

Within the literature relating to business ethics, while there are some writers who do refer to the importance of organisational culture (See e.g. Waters, Bird & Chant, 1986; Waters & Bird, 1987; Kram, Yeager & Bird, 1989) detailed accounts of culture are absent.[32] While writers such as Worrel et al (1985); Trevino, (1986); Stead et al (1987); and Bommer et al (1987) have constructed theoretical models of the contextual - and hence cultural - factors influencing the ethicality, or otherwise, of organisational members decision-making processes, such approaches are analytical rather than empirical.[33]

In considering the literature relating to organisational culture, one finds a similar "gap" or reluctance to talk explicitly about ethics in any detail. In part this reflects the observations of researchers such as Jackall (1988) and Bird & Waters (1989) concerning the reluctance of practising managers to talk explicitly about ethics.

McCoy (1985), while observing that many managers he has come into contact with are interested in the ethical dimensions of organisational activity, also observes that they appear to be reluctant to discuss this openly with their colleagues. Such reluctance, he suggests can be due to a variety of factors (1985:35). For some, he suggests it is because they "lack a language" (1985:36) which allows them to discuss ethics in the same way in which they talk about economic and administrative matters, and that they are unable to recognize the ethical aspects of their everyday business behaviour. For others, he suggests, there is the belief that ethics refers to "academic abstractions" (1985:35) which bear little relation to the activity of business. Such observations, while reinforcing the argument that business ethics and organisational culture are interrelated and concomitant with one another, leaves open to conjecture how such a situation may have initially arisen, and why it is a subject of concern at the present time?

Where one does find some overt discussion is with regard to managing the process of cultural change within an organisation (See e.g. Sathe, 1983; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983; Wilkins & Dyer, 1988; and Fitzgerald, 1988).[34] Changing the culture of an organisation is perceived to be a prolonged and difficult process, and Wilkins & Ouchi suggest that the resistance to such change might be reduced, and the overall process expedited,

> When people believe that they will be treated fairly and that if they are honest, they will have time to learn a new paradigm, they seem to be quite willing to experiment with new ideas.
>
> (1983:479)

Likewise, Wilkins & Dyer contend that the nature of the exchange relationship between individuals and groups within organisations is an important factor affecting the nature of their relationships,

> The basic issue is reciprocity or fairness of the exchange..... If conditions of reciprocity are not met, groups and individuals who cannot or do not leave the organisation develop countercultural or alienative orientations to the whole.
>
> (1988:524)

Sathe (1983) poses a fundamental question in asking whether managers have any business trying to change people's beliefs and values. In observing that it is inherent in the nature of the manager's job to influence organisational behaviour, he also notes that this should be undertaken in a "responsible and professional manner" (1983:17). Quite what is implied or intended by such an observation is not clear, although it does prompt questions regarding the "professionalisation of management" and what that might entail with regard to their education and training (Reed & Anthony, 1992), and why it is thought necessary? One response is to contextualise such issues within an analysis of the changing nature of contemporary society and the controversies surrounding not only the role of management within the business organisation, but also the role of business per se within society.

The other area where one can identify a somewhat more implicit acknowledgement of the relationship between ethics and organisational culture is in the literature relating to the "moral status of the corporation". From a sociological perspective, the idea of considering the organisation as being a "moral agent" is problematic in that it would appear to be reifying the organisation. McCoy (1985) however, contends that they are moral agents (1985:41) maintaining that the idea can be traced back to the writings of both Plato and Aristotle, and that it is also recognised in law. More contemporaneously however, he relates the concept of moral agency to the that of corporate culture, citing the work of both Deal & Kennedy (1982) and Peters & Waterman (1982) as illustrating the current interest in collective values. He contends that corporate moral agency, while not implying obedience to a set of ideal norms or values,

> refers to that process of choosing certain goals rather than others, selecting means for attaining them, setting standards of performance, guiding implementing, and evaluating results.
>
> (1985:72)

In this respect he appears to echo the views of Epstein (1987, 1989) regarding the need to view corporate social responsibility as a internally generated process by which managers formulate the policies and strategy

of the organisation. In formulating such policies, the concern is also to legitimate them in the eyes of both organisational employees and the wider community as a means of both legitimating managerial decision-making and achieving increased employee commitment to their achievement.

In a similar vein, Pastin (1988) distinguishes between the "Ethics of Individuals" and the "Ethics of Organisations" contending that,

> The ethics of an organisation is the set of ground rules by which that organisation acts.
>
> (1986:24)

McCoy contends that the relationship between the morality of the organisation and the morality of individual organisational members is a symbiotic one (1985:68) and as such is mutually interdependent. However, it is the very nature of such apparent interdependencies that has come to be viewed as problematic by contemporary management when viewed from the perspective of management control and the concern with achieving improvements in both organisational efficiencies and organisational flexibility in order to function effectively in the contemporary business environment. While on the one hand, such concerns have resulted in the desire to both "manage" and change the organisational culture, there has also been a recognition of the need to further legitimate such activity in the eyes of organisational members in order to facilitate greater employee involvement in, and acceptance of, the changes to business structures and operating procedures. It is within such a context that one can account for the increased interest in business ethics - viewed as an addition to the traditional mechanisms of managerial control.

**Institutionalising Ethics**

Jensen & Wygant (1990) observe that ethical activity, while being guided by standards internal to the individual, can also be influenced, reinforced, and modified by the creation of external standards expressed by specific rules, regulations and procedures within the organisation. In addition, it is apparent that actual behaviour, as opposed to personal ethical beliefs, can be influenced by both peer, and work group norms. In terms of the exercise of control within organisations, Hopwood (1974) identifies three types of control which may influence behaviour: administrative; social; and self, although it is the nature of their interrelationship which is important for the way in which control is experienced by organisational members, and the way in which it affects an individual's behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs.[35]

The institutionalisation of ethics within business organisations involves the deliberate attempt by management to incorporate and make explicit specific ethical beliefs and practices into both the formal and informal operating procedures of the organisation. The objective is to achieve a situation where

the desired values and behaviours are perceived as being both formally and informally accepted by organisational members, and in addition are internalised by individuals as part of their personal standards of behaviour. This may take a variety of forms: ethics training (Snell, 1990; Jensen & Wygant, 1990); the establishment of an ethics ombudsman, ethics committee, or ethical advisors (Feldman et al, 1986; Center for Business Ethics, 1986, 1992); or modifying the organisation's information and reporting systems (McCoy, 1985), for example, the use of social audits, and the explicit inclusion of ethics in a corporations mission statement.

Two particularly important examples of changes to an organisation's information and reporting systems are corporate codes of ethics and practice, and whistleblowing. The former because it represents a deliberate attempt to establish formal standards of behaviour and practice on the part of organisational members, the latter because it reflects the tensions existing between collective and individual behaviour, and the desire to regulate them. Both, in their separate ways, reflect the concern by management to specify the nature and content of desired and expected behaviour on the part of organisational employees, while also seeking to legitimate the right of management to specify what such behaviour should involve.

**Corporate Codes of Ethics and Conduct**

A broad definition of a corporate code is provided by Melrose-Woodman & Kverndal as being,

> All statements setting down corporate principles, ethics, rules of conduct codes of practice or company philosophy concerning responsibility to employees, shareholders, consumers, the environment or any other aspects of society external to the company.
>
> (1976:5)

A somewhat more specific definition is provided by Mathews (1988) reflecting the concern to use codes as a means of specifying behaviour for members of the organisation.

While both definitions are concerned with the control of human behaviour within an organisational context, an important difference is that while Mathews is concerned solely with behaviour internal to the organisation, emphasizing the concern of management to control employee behaviour, Melrose-Woodman & Kverndal reflect a broader approach adopting a stakeholder model of the organisation. This reflects the concern to both acknowledge the external factors which may impinge upon the organisation, and the desire to manage such interdependencies as a way of influencing the task, or operating environment of the organisation.[36]

Both the format and content of codes may vary considerably. For example, among the forty organisations identified by Melrose-Woodman & Kverndal (1976) as having codes it was found that they took three main forms:-

1. Separate company codes or management policy documents specifically dealing with social responsibility.

2. Statements of responsibilities appearing in other policy documents.

3. Annual reports to shareholders and/or employees.

In contrast, Schlegilmilch & Houston (1989) identified thirty-one companies having codes and identified three basic formats:-

1. Regulatory documents with detailed rules and guidelines which provided staff with precise advice on their behaviour and conduct.

2. Shorter and more broadly phrased codes containing statements of aims, objectives, and the philosophy and values which the organisation ascribed to. Such statements normally appeared in other policy documents of the organisation.

3. Elaborate codes of ethics identifying the organisation's social responsibilities to a range of stakeholders.[37]

In part, the content and design of such codes reflects both the choice of audience to whom they are directed. Some are predominantly concerned with dealing with issues internal to the organisation and are aimed at members of the organisation such as managers and/or employees. Others reflect a concern to disseminate the statement more widely and provide a public statement of how the company wishes to be perceived, providing statements on which subsequent behaviour can be judged.

In addition, the design of corporate codes may vary with regard to the level of detail or specificity in which the code is set out. Commenting upon this Molander (1987) observes that if a code it too general, or imprecise, it may not always be clear to organisational members when the code is being violated. On the other hand, however, an overly prescriptive code may inhibit behaviour and the ability of the organisation to respond to required changes in its operations.

Arguments both for and against codes can be found within the business ethics and management literature reflecting the variety of objectives ascribed to them.[38] Bowie (1990), like other writers on the subject, observes that having a code is a means of avoiding the need for government regulation, a view which reflects an image of a self-regulating market mechanism. In addition, a code can function as a check upon the possible misuse of their power by employers and managers when dealing with employees, serving to clarify areas of uncertainty and reducing the need for managers to make subjective judgments (Maitland, 1988; Donaldson, 1989).

In a more general sense, Behrman (1988) notes that codes can provide an important medium for communication within an organisation, specifying standards of behaviour, and thereby helping to create an ethical climate or awareness within the organisation (See also Starr, 1983; Hyman et al, 1990). An important factor here is the question of to whom the code is distributed, i.e. to some or all levels of management; to all members of the organisation; and/or to various external stakeholder interest groups? Melrose-Woodman & Kverndal (1976) contend that a written code can serve to improve a company's public image, and can also provide some protection for managers against external criticism. Webley (1988) as well as providing guidelines for the construction of a code, suggests that in addition to providing employees with a clear idea of what the company stands for and wishes to articulate in practice, codes help to develop a sense of pride among staff and give a focus to the company as a whole. Such observations reflect the way in which codes can be used to foster an increased sense of motivation and commitment among employees, encouraging them to identify with their employing organisation. It also indicates how the construction and implementation of such codes can be used as part of a broader process of cultural change within an organisation.

Molander (1987) observes that arguments in support of codes can be divided into two, those arising from interests external to the business community, and those deriving from parties belonging to the business community. Arguments in favour from outside the business community tend to focus on the weakness or shortcoming of the market system, and the inadequacy of the law as a means of controlling business behaviour. Arguments in favour of codes from those working within a business context tend to advocate the role of codes in: helping to relieve ethical dilemmas for individuals; reducing the incidence of unethical behaviour; and helping to restore public confidence in the business community.

Here again, one can see how corporate codes can be used as a means of both legitimating, but also amending, the workings of the market system. Kitner & Green (1978) provide an unusually clear example of this when contending that codes are essential for democratic freedom. They argue that by acting to reduce the need for government intervention, something

which would undermine both individual initiative and the free enterprise system, corporate codes thereby sustain democracy. The implication here is that democratic freedom is linked directly to the effective workings of a free-market economy. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the contemporary interest by business organisations in the design, implementation, and operation of corporate codes of ethics is not exclusively "ethical", but needs to be viewed against the backdrop of changes to the environment within which they are required to operate.

In some respects the design, implementation, and enforcement of corporate codes reflects the contemporary dilemma confronting many business organisations: the concern to achieve enhanced control over employees; manage their relationships with external stakeholder groups; and legitimate the role of free enterprise to an increasingly cynical and uncertain public. At the same time, management is required to achieve increased levels of organisational efficiency and competitiveness, during a period which appears to require almost continuous organisational change and flexibility in both organisational structures and processes.

Pastin (1988) identifies two approaches towards ethics and control, "Agreement-Racket-Ethics" (1988:42) and "Autonomous Ethics" (1988:44). "Agreement-Racket Ethics" occurs where the concept of ethics is used as an ideological weapon, that is, as an externally imposed method of exerting control over individuals by creating feelings of guilt or being in the wrong. In addition, he refers to the "new ethics of control" which he maintains has emerged within some organisations. This occurs when organisational management, consultants, and writers on business, emphasize the value and importance of "teamwork" as a means of improving organisational efficiency and competitiveness (See e.g. Peters & Waterman, 1982). Du Gay & Salaman (1992) make a similar point when they refer to the way in which employees may be encouraged to identify with the customer as a means of encouraging improved performance.

Another example of the use of ethics as a means of facilitating improved control over employee behaviour and attitudes is can be found in the literature relating to the role of leadership within business organisations. While writers on organisational culture, such as Schein (1985) have drawn attention to the role of the founder in establishing the culture of an organisation, for some ethicists the leader is also important for providing an "ethical role model" for others to emulate. Laczniak (1983) contends that the moral tone of an organisation is set by the senior management and that,

> the organisation is but a lengthened shadow of the morality of the persons in charge.
>
> (1983:26)

Peters & Waterman state that the real role of the organisation's chief executive is the "management of values" (1982:26) Supporting such a viewpoint Andrews (1989) contends that the actions and behaviour of the chief executive are generally acknowledged to be more influential than any formal, written policy.[39]

Such an approach to business ethics reinforces the view that the creation and maintenance of an ethical climate or culture within an organisation should be the responsibility of senior management, a view which appears to uncritically assume that managers will be ethical. Or, alternatively, that they will be in a position to determine how ethical behaviour will be defined within the organisation.

In contrast, a somewhat more cautionary approach is urged by Bavaria (1991) who suggests that observing actual managerial behaviour suggests that not all managers act as ethical role models. Citing examples of management compensation schemes, the use of golden parachutes, and instances of price-fixing and violation of fiduciary duty, he points out that senior managers are not always the "good guys" as implied in some business texts. Ludwig & Longenecker (1993) observe that the ethical propriety of senior managers may be adversely affected by the very success of their efforts to improve organisational performance.[40] Such observations reinforce the advantage to be had by having a code of ethics as a means of specifying desired standards of behaviour, particularly when senior management cannot be depended upon to act as effective role models for others to emulate, and/or where their behaviour is observable by other organisational members.

Before leaving the consideration of corporate codes of ethics it is important to observe that in order for such codes to be entirely effective they would have to address all three forms of control identified by Hopwood (1974): administrative; social; and self, in a mutually reinforcing fashion. It is unlikely that such a situation will ever exist outside that of abstract theorizing and to place undue emphasize on the control element of corporate codes is to miss the point. While it is true that the majority of such codes are designed, implemented, and utilised by management for the purposes of improving organisational performance, through specifying acceptable standards of behaviour and performance on the part of organisational members, it is necessary to take account of the context within which they are introduced.

The contemporary period is epitomised by continual change and uncertainty. Not only in terms of environmental and technological change affecting the formulation of corporate strategy,[41] but also with regard to the changing public concerns regarding both business performance, and expectations regarding their experience of work and employment.[42] It is within such a complex and dynamic context, reflecting uncertainties regarding the structure of business activity; the nature of organisations; and the construction of the self through the experience of work and employment,

that the role, composition, and implementation of corporate codes must be viewed. Viewed at the meso level of analysis, they are both a reaction to, and an expression of, ongoing uncertainties regarding the changing nature of organisational activities regarding: the role and function of management; the rights and obligations to various stakeholder groups; and the changing requirements and aspirations of employees regarding the exercise of greater autonomy and discretion within the workplace.

**Whistleblowing**

At first glance a consideration of whistleblowing, given that it is a very personal, individual, activity - an example of what Pastin refers to as "Autonomous Ethics" (1988:44) in contrast to "Agreement -Racket Ethics" - may appear out of place. In contrast, it is argued that the act of whistleblowing, and the interest shown in it by both business ethicists and organisational management provides an important example of contemporary uncertainty regarding the nature of business activity and the role of the individual within the workplace.

James provides a succinct definition of whistleblowing as,

> The attempt of an employee or former employee of an organisation to disclose what he or she believes to be wrongdoing in or by the organisation.
>
> (1990:332)

Bok, reflecting a stakeholder view of the business organisation observes that whistleblowers are concerned to "spotlight neglect or abuses that threaten the public interest" (1988:292). While the act of whistleblowing is often intended to draw attention to some form of organisational wrongdoing the literature draws attention to the costs of such action for the person involved.[43] Behrman (1988) observes that many whistleblowers have stated, after the event, that if they had realized the personal costs involved they would not have done it.

The usual argument advanced against whistleblowing is that it is an act of disloyalty to one's employing organisation (De George, 1990:205), although one could as easily contend the opposite in that to inform management of wrongdoing <u>is</u> an act indicating both loyalty and commitment to the organisation. The difference in evaluation reflects both differing approaches to the subject and the variety of ways in which the act of whistleblowing may be undertaken.[44]

De George (1990) in identifying three approaches towards the act: it is morally prohibited; morally permissible; and in some cases morally mandatory, suggests that there are five conditions that need to be taken into account in determining whether whistleblowing is either permissible and/or

obligatory (1990:208). In criticising De George's approach James (1990) contends that the guidelines provided by De George are not applicable to every situation which may necessitate whistleblowing. In addition he contends that De George's contention that the whistleblower should exhaust internal procedures for dealing with the situation before considering blowing the whistle externally, may not always be appropriate. It may both delay the implementation of corrective action, and/or provide time for individuals to either destroy or amend evidence relating to the act in question.

While De George's approach to the issue might be criticised for placing too much importance upon the internal processes for dealing with whistleblowing, reflecting a managerialist approach to the issue, both James (1990) and Jensen (1987) focus upon the factors affecting the individual's decision to blow the whistle. Jensen, in drawing attention to a number of both procedural and substantive issues which the individual needs to consider illustrates both the complexity of the decision-making process for the individual and the need to consider the implications for both the individual, one's family; work colleagues; organisational superiors; and the public at large. Near (1989) illustrates the complexity of such situations when noting that even when a whistleblower acts in what is felt to be the best interests of the public, sections of that same public may not welcome the disclosure if it results in the organisation discontinuing operations, thereby jeopardising employment within the community, the profitability of local shopkeepers, and the general level of prosperity experienced by the community.

In emphasizing the need to protect the whistleblower against the possibility of punishment and retaliation writers such as Hauserman contend that protecting such individuals is one way of reasserting "individual morality in the corporate structure" (1986:9). The paradox it that such individual morality should be supported and sustained by developing an appropriate structure and culture within which the individual may feel able to blow the whistle when it is felt necessary to do so, thereby seeking to integrate the ethics of the individual with the ethics of the organisation.[45]

In order to account for the concern of business ethicists and managers with whistleblowing it is necessary to see it as symbolizing both an expression of, and reaction to the contemporary uncertainty regarding: the nature of business activity within society; the role of the individual within the organisation; and the criteria by which both such collective and individual behaviour should be judged and evaluated.

Both the literatures relating to corporate codes of ethics and whistleblowing reflect the contemporary tension between the desire to control and manage the complexity of today's industrial society, and establish acceptable criteria by which such actions, both individual and collective, may be based and evaluated. Similarly, the concern to "manage" the culture of business organisations reflects the desire to both acknowledge, but also control, the

complex processes by which the socio-psychological processes of organisational life have come to be understood.

Both the concepts of business ethics and organisational culture reflect the recognition of the complexity of modern society and the realization that previously accepted practices for determining what is "right and wrong", and "managing" both organisations and their employees have proved inadequate for the task.

**Summary and Discussion**

The preceding comments have been concerned to discuss both approaches to the study of organisational culture and its relationship with business ethics and in doing so, have identified a number of issues for consideration.

Firstly, the ostensible distinction between the two fields of knowledge is not an absolute one. However, where the interrelationships are acknowledged within the literatures, it tends to be somewhat partial reflecting the disciplinary background of the authors (See e.g. Martin et al, 1983).

Secondly, the literature on organisational culture is both extensive and complex, reflecting a variety of theoretical approaches to the concept. Similarly, as indicated in the previous chapter, there are a number of competing approaches to the study of business ethics. In this respect both the respective literatures reflect the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation.

The argument being developed here is that the commonalties existing between the two areas of study is not accidental in that both areas of investigation reflect uncertainties regarding the nature of the contemporary social world and how it can be understood and made amenable to comprehension and regulation. Both areas of study focus attention on the meso-level of analysis - the interrelationships between the individual and the organisation. That both literatures concentrate their attention on the business organisation is particularly important in that it symbolizes the importance of the business organisation within contemporary Western society. In addition, both literatures reflect, albeit in different ways, contemporary uncertainties regarding the nature, and effects, of such organisations upon the individual and hence for society viewed as a collective entity.

Thirdly, in seeking to establish methods by which organisational behaviour, both at the individual and collective levels of analysis, may be investigated, comprehended, and made amenable to modification, both literatures reflect the contemporary uncertainty within society regarding the nature of individual behaviour and its implications for both business activity and the wider social community.

The business ethics literature reflects the tensions between prescriptive and contextualist accounts of behaviour, and the difficulties of establishing acceptable standards and criteria for its evaluation. The organisational culture literature reflects both the desire to account for the individual within a collectivist schema, while seeking to acknowledge the complexity of the phenomena that it seeks to account for. Both literatures reflect contemporary uncertainty regarding the nature of the "self" and the individual as a socially constructed artifact subject to contextual factors which appear to both influence and constrain behaviour, albeit without entirely precluding the exercise of individual choice and discretion.

Fourthly, and related to the preceding observations, both literatures reflect uncertainties regarding the role and effects of the free market economic system for both individual and collective behaviour. The organisational culture literature reflects this in the theorizing of both organisational culture as a social phenomenon, and the debates concerning whether it is possible to consciously and deliberately "manage", and hence control, modify, and construct the cultural milieux within which the individual is situated, thereby facilitating the modification of the individual in terms of behaviour, thought, and belief. The business ethics literature exhibits similar concerns through discussions regarding the moral status of the organisation, the concern with corporate codes of ethics and conduct, and the socio-cultural and psychological dimensions of whistleblowing.

Finally, both literatures exhibit the contemporary concerns regarding the tensions between the pursuit of individualistic self-interest and the need for community. In this respect they reflect the concern for the effects of the dominance of free-market ideology and practice for both individuals and society in recent years. While neither of the literatures is particularly hostile to the free-market, appearing to seek a modification rather than an alternative to it, both literatures reflect contemporary uncertainty regarding the role of the market within society. Paradoxically, while focusing attention upon the meso-level of analysis, both literatures indicate the need to contextualise this concern within a broader theoretical framework. This is reflected in the interest that both literatures exhibit regarding the need to establish some form of communal solidarity within the organisation.

This can be illustrated in the writings of Ray (1986) where, in considering the contemporary interest shown in the idea of "corporate culture" he relates this to the writings of Emile Durkheim. Indicating that Durkheim was concerned with identifying sources of moral order within a context of rapid and profound societal change, he suggests that the business corporation may provide a suitable vehicle, commenting that,

> More than other forms of control - corporate culture elicits sentiments and emotions, and contains possibilities to ensnare workers in a hegemonic system. (1986:287)

While both advocates of culture management and Durkheim appear to share a concern with the causes and consequences of the meaninglessness and disillusionment prevalent within industrial society, there are substantial differences in approach. Writers supporting the management of organisational culture appear to suggest that such a process could provide the means of both motivating organisational employees and providing them with a sense of both commitment and loyalty to the organisation. At the same time this would provide them with a positive source of social and self-identity.

In responding to Ray's paper, Dahler-Larsen (1994) contends that there are important differences between advocates of corporate culture and Durkheim's concern with morality. There is, he suggests, a need to contextualise the concern with corporate culture - the belief in the ability to manage the culture of an organisation - within an analysis of the socio-cultural and economic context within which it has developed. In disagreeing with Ray's hypothesis, Dahler-Larsen seeks to contextualise the concern with corporate culture as being a response to three interrelated crises.

Firstly, the contemporary competitiveness of the business community and the requirement to adopt a different approach to the management, control, and motivation of employees. Anthony (1994) echoes this in observing that the concern with culture management reflects a situation where,

> the free market solves its problems of relationship with people by seeking to enclose them completely within its own material ethos.
>
> (1994:76)

Secondly, a crisis in organisation theory, in which the literature concerned with organisational culture as a field of academic discourse and research is concerned to both express and account for the complexity of individual and collective behaviour. Thirdly, a crisis of meaning within society, reflecting doubts regarding the meaning and effects of "progress" and the comprehensibility and ability to control the consequences of scientific and technological knowledge.

The reference to Emile Durkheim is relevant in that both Dahler-Larsen and Anthony indicate the need to locate the interest in the management of organisational culture within a broader socio-cultural and economic context. In a similar fashion, this chapter has contended that it is necessary to contextualise the contemporary interest in business ethics, and account for both the nature of academic discourse within such a field of knowledge, and its relationship with the nature of contemporary business practice and concerns. Both phenomena - organisational culture and business ethics - reflect contemporary uncertainties regarding the nature of academic knowledge and its relationship to business practice.

The argument that will be elucidated in later chapters is that business ethics can be seen as being both an expression of, and reaction to contemporary uncertainties regarding business activity.

Before proceeding with an elaboration of this however, it is necessary to provide an account of the way in which such a train of thought evolved during the undertaking of the research. The following chapter provides an account of both the methodological processes by which the empirical case-study undertaken as part of the investigation into the nature of business ethics was undertaken, and the role which it played in prompting the desire to account for the contemporary form and content of business ethics, as a field of both knowledge and practice, within an analysis of contemporary society.

## Notes

1. See for example, Morgan (1986); Czarniawska-Joerges (1992); Alvesson & Berg, 1992; and Alvesson, 1993.

2. In transferring such observations from the literature on organisational culture to that of business ethics one can perceive a partial explanation for the contemporary interest in both corporate social responsibility and corporate governance. Both concepts, and their articulation in organisational policies and practices reflect a concern to legitimate the activities and regulation of business organisations in the eyes of both government and the public.

3. In this respect, the literature relating to corporate strategy reflects both the concern of organisational management to analyze, and influence the characteristics of their operating or task environment, and also the way in which approaches to this have changed in response to changing perceptions of both the environment and their relationship to it. See for example, Whittington (1993) and Stacey (1993).

4. With regard to corporate social responsibility the writings of Sethi, (1975); Carroll (1979); Arcelus & Schaefer (1982); Carroll & Hoy (1984); Epstein, (1987), (1989); Freeman & Gilbert (1988) indicate both the extent to which particular manifestations of socially responsible behaviour on the part of a business organisation may reflect both managerial choice and discretion, and an appreciation of particular stakeholder power and interests, as well as reflecting an appreciation of its increasing importance as a dimension of strategic analysis and practice.

5. Within the business ethics literature a particularly important expression of such a concern is the article by Carr (1968) which questions whether individuals within a working or business environment conduct

themselves according to a different set of values and ethical beliefs than when in a non-work environment.

6. For example writers such as Veblen, (1899, 1904) and Durkheim (1933), among others, express concern at the effects of industrialisation upon Western lifestyles, attitudes and values.

7. Although writers such as Gordon (1985, 1991); Pennings & Gresov (1986) do acknowledge the influence of industrial, technological, and economic environmental factors.

8. For a similar view, see Louis (1985:78).

9. For example, Golden (1992) contends that the literature on organisational culture has underestimated the ability of the individual to not only adapt to, but also challenge and depart from informal cultural norms and expectations. With regard to the relationship between organisational culture and business ethics, this is particularly important when considering the act of whistleblowing.

10. The concept of organisational learning has become increasingly popular in the nineties, being viewed as a means by which organisational members may be encouraged to reflect upon the dysfunctional consequences of taken-for-granted beliefs, attitudes, and expectations for organisational behaviour and performance, for example, Argyris (1990) "organisational defence routines". One explanation for the popularity of the concept is that it can be utilised in order to facilitate changes to the existing culture of an organisation, thereby reflecting contemporary concerns with both culture management and organisational change.(See e.g. Drucker, 1992; Starbuck, 1992; Leonard-Barton; Snell, 1992 Dodgson, 1993; Burdett, 1993; Garvin, 1993; McGill & Slocum, 1993; Schein, 1993 Ulrick et al, 1993)

    In terms of business ethics, it lends itself as a mechanism by which organisational actors may be encouraged to reflect upon the effects upon organisational behaviour and business performance of contemporary values-in-use, and as a means of distinguishing them from the espoused values of the organisation.

11. For a contrasting approach to organisational culture and politics see Riley (1983).

12. There is a considerable literature on this subject reflecting the differing views on the matter. See, e.g. Ladd (1970); French (1984); Goodpastor & Matthews (1982); Velasquez (1983); Werhane (1985); May (1987);

Buchholz (1989); Danley (1990); Pfeiffer (1990) Ewin (1991). What might be summarily dismissed by sociologists as a problem of reification, has attracted considerable debate among philosophers.

13. Which is reflected in the increasing prominence given to organisational change in the management literature. See e.g. Kanter (1983; 1989), Pascale (1990), Buchanan & Boddy (1992), Kanter et al, 1992, Wilson (1992), Bate, (1994).

14. See for example, Schwartz & Davis (1981), Wilkins & Ouchi (1983), Shrivastava (1985), Barney (1986), Deshpande & Parasuraman (1986), Scholz (1987), Sherwood (1988), and Gordon (1992).

15. It is interesting to note in passing that the concern with organisational culture and its management serves to reinforce the importance of the work ethic at a time when its role and importance within Western society is being questioned. See e.g. Jenkins & Sherman (1979, 1981); Hines & Searle (1979); Clemitson & Rodgers (1981); Clarke (1982); and Handy (1984).

16. The efforts of informal work groups have always been concerned to "manage" both their immediate task environment, and to manage their relationships with supervisors and management, and the latter's perception of organisational activity and their role in determining it. The "systematic soldiering" identified by Frederick Taylor illustrates the ability of employees to "manage" aspects of their work environment. See also the work of Donald Roy (1952, 1954).

17. Viewed in terms of the literature relating to organisational control such observations indicate the need to acknowledge both the number of control systems that are present within an organisation, as indicated by Hopwood (1974), and the complex nature of their interrelationships (Johnson & Gill, 1993). This emphasizes the need to challenge the assumptions of managerial control systems based on cybernetic, or machine-models of the organisation, and recognize both the pluralistic and conflictual nature of organisational controls (e.g. Ansari, 1977; Dermer & Lucas (1986); Dermer (1988); Anthony (1990).

18. See Legge (1989) and Ogbonna (1992) for a useful discussion of the contemporary contradictions to be found within Human Resource Management practice.

19. The ethics of studying and changing organisational culture are discussed by Jones (1985), Deetz (1985), while the ethical aspects of Human Resource Management are addressed by a number of writers, e.g. Dachler & Enderle (1989); Adler & Bigoness (1992); Keenoy & Anthony (1992); and Schwoerer et al (1995).

20. The very use of cultural typologies help to provide the illusion of order, comprehensibility and certainty - the ability to understand, identify and "know" a culture, when the concept itself is an acknowledgement of the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation.

21. They observe however that writers adopting this paradigm vary with regard to what particular manifestations of culture are studied. Writers such as Deal & Kennedy (1982); Peters & Waterman (1982) and Schein (1985) for example, focus on the importance of the espoused values of senior management.

    Others such as Ouchi (1981) and Schall (1983) are concerned with the importance of formal and informal practices, such as decision-making and communication procedures, while others such as Trice & Beyer (1984, 1985), Beyer & Trice (1987) are concerned primarily with the role of organisational rites and rituals.

    Other writers are concerned with the "deeper products of culture", e.g. Schein (1983, 1985) draws attention to the importance of the basic, taken-for-granted assumptions to be found within organisations, while Barley (1983) focuses upon codes of meanings, and Smircich (1983b) is concerned with shared understandings.

22. Such a focus of concern may also help to explain why the role of the "transformational " or "charismatic" leader is seen by some writers as being particularly important for the process of organisational change.

23. See for example: Baker (1980); Schwartz & Davis (1981); Tichy (1982); Deal & Kennedy (1982); Peters & Waterman (1982); Sathe (1983, 1985); Sethia & Glinow (1985); Shrivastava (1985); Barney (1986); Deshpande & Parasuraman (1986); Plant & Ryan (1988); Sherwood (1988); Reiman & Weiner (1988).

24. See for example: Tichy (1982); Plant & Ryan (1988); Sherwood (1988); O'Reilly (1989). Likewise Beyer & Trice (1987) indicate how managers can make use of "rites of integration", such as interdepartmental meetings, company newsletters, and social activities such as office parties to bring organisational subgroups together in order to foster some degree of integration and common identity.

25. Keenoy & Anthony (1992) question the role of Human Resource Management, contending that it should itself be viewed as a "cultural construction" which serves to legitimate belief in the "enterprise culture" and the values of the market economy.

26. One exception to this is the literature concerned with criticizing Peters & Waterman's In Search of Excellence, see for example, Wood (1989); Silver (1987); Du Gay (1991), and Guest (1992).

27. According to Martin & Meyerson,

> "Uncertainty refers to a lack of predictability in, for example the organisation's environment or technology. Contradiction refers to cultural manifestations and interpretations that are capable of double meanings as in, for example, a paradox or an irreconcilable conflict. Confusion is caused by ignorance or lack of information, rather than awareness of contradiction." (1988 : 112)

28. They also suggest that organisational members may themselves make use of such a multiple-paradigm perspective (Martin & Meyerson, 1988:122), which suggests one way in which individuals may seek to deal with ambiguous situations experienced by them within the workplace.

29. Within the management literature also, there is an increasing acknowledgement of the need to recognize the complexity of organisational life and the business environment. Writers such as Kanter (1989); Pascale (1990); Kanter et al (1992), and Peters (1992) indicate the need for management to be able to operate within a context of complexity and uncertainty, and continual change.

30. It is also worth observing that the quote from Schein serves to repudiate those writers who contend that he adopts an overly functionalist and consensual model of organisational culture.

31. Saffold (1988) questions the value of the concept - "strong cultures" - arguing that the concept is seriously flawed.

32. Jackall (1988) provides what is probably the most detailed empirical account of the influence of organisational culture upon ethical behaviour, although the study is a composite of research in several organisations.

33. One notable exception to this is the work of Toffler (1991).

34. The other area where one can find some discussion of the relationship between ethics and organisational culture is in the writings of Cavanagh et al (1981) and Velasquez et al (1983) who are concerned with providing of ethical guidelines for managers engaging in organisational politics.

35. See also, Johnson & Gill (1993), especially chapter 2.

36. It is also important to acknowledge that there may be a number of codes of practice influencing organisational behaviour. Bowie (1990) draws attention to "industry-wide" codes of practice. Jennings (1990) draws attention to the statements of both professional institutions and trade organisations. Getz (1990) and Frederick (1991) draw attention to the role and influence of transnational codes of conduct reflecting the concern of both individual governments and international bodies such as the International Labour Organisation, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development to influence both the behaviour and policies of international business organisations.

37. In their research Schlegilmilch & Houston found that only four of the thirty-one companies with codes actually referred to it as a "Code of Ethics". Other titles employed included:

    Business Conduct Guidelines
    Operating Principles
    Company Objectives
    Staff Handbook
    Code of Conduct
    Codes with Company Name
     eg The Whitbread Way

38. A good summary of the benefits derived from having a code is provided by Manley (1992:4) where he identifies eighteen advantages to be had.

39. The importance of senior managers as ethical role models is mentioned by a number of writers on business ethics: See e.g. Guth & Taguiri (1965); Newstron & Ruch (1975); Lincoln et al (1982); Weiss (1986); Hosmer (1987); Badaracco & Ellsworth (1989); Nash (1990); DePree (1993); Carlson & Perrewe (1995); Murphy & Enderle (1995).

40. A number of articles deal with the more problematic aspects of senior managers and chief executives acting as ethical leaders. See e.g. Enderle (1987); Kelly (1987); Kets de Vries (1989); Howell & Avilio (1992); Hollander (1995); Rost (1995); Sankowsky (1995).

41. See for example, Whittington (1993) or Stacey (1993) for discussions of changes in the nature of the corporate strategy making process, and Davidow & Malone (1992); Tapscott & Caston (1993) and Tapscott (1996) for discussions of the effects of information technology upon the nature of business behaviour, structure, and strategy.

42. See for example, Handy (1984; 1989; 1994).

43. See for example, Hauserman (1986); Bok (1988); Near (1989); James (1990); De George (1990); Miceli & Near (1992).

44. James (1990) for example, identifies eight different aspects, or dimensions of the activity: Internal whistleblowing; External whistleblowing; Personal whistleblowing; Impersonal whistleblowing; Current whistleblowing; Alumni whistleblowing; Open whistleblowing; and Anonymous whistleblowing.

45. An alternative expression of this can be seen in the concept of the "Learning Organisation" and the desire to create a cultural milieux within the organisation which encourages an open dialogue among members in order to reduce the effects of "organisational defence routines" (Argyris, 1990:25) which act to impair the operational efficiency of the organisation. The objective is to facilitate the creation of a culture which would facilitate an introspective dialogue among members as a means of encouraging a climate which would be supportive of ongoing innovation and creativity. The expectation is that such a culture would also generate an ethos which would encourage the discussion of ethical issues. (See for example, Argyris, 1990; Senge, 1990).

# Chapter Three
# Reflecting on Methods

## Introduction

The chapter dealing with the methodology utilised during the research is usually one where the author provides a considered account of the reasons chosen for the particular approach which was adopted and how it was then undertaken. The concern is to provide an orderly account of the process indicating the methodological knowledge and skills of the author and that the entire process was carefully thought out before commencing the empirical research. The overall objective is to indicate the practical skills and methodological awareness of the author and that he knew what he was doing and why the particular approach was adopted. In reality, this author would have to admit that this was not how it happened.

In order to clarify the situation it is necessary to appreciate the chronological process by which the work was undertaken. Like any part-time research the work was undertaken as and when time and opportunity became available. Inevitably therefore the process was both prolonged, lasting approximately six years, and could be succinctly described as being both periodic and piece-meal. The practical effects of this was that individual draft chapters were produced which were only partially related to the one which preceded it.

While such inconsistency could be resolved during the "writing-up" phase, it is also necessary to account for the way in which the focus of the research changed considerably during, and account of, the process by which it was undertaken. To suggest that such a process can be accounted for by the reflective processes of the author is to probably over-simplify the context, and process, by which it took place.

In terms of the overall thesis, the act of undertaking the empirical research served as a kind of catalyst for crystallizing a number of hitherto disparate thought processes on the part of author.It provided both a practical and theoretical fulcrum around which initial thoughts regarding the nature of business ethics were re-evaluated, reconsidered, and eventually located within a broader theoretical framework which at the time was only somewhat vaguely perceived by the writer. To pretend therefore that the approach to the research was systematic and orderly would be untrue. While it is an over-exaggeration to suggest that it was a case of serendipity, the actual process by which the research took on its present form was partly due to circumstance.

In order to understand the "methodology" utilised in the research therefore, it is necessary to distinguish two separate, but inter-related processes. On the one hand, there was the methodology used in the undertaking of the empirical investigation of Sheffield Business School. On the other hand,

there is the thought-processes by which the main argument developed in the present work gradually took on its present form. Initially, the concern will be to provide an account of the way in which the empirical research was undertaken.

## Researching Ethics within a Cultural Context

### Approaches to Researching Business Ethics

The initial approach was to identify two distinct research literatures, one concerned with researching organisational culture, the other dealing with the investigation of business ethics. The hope was that by investigating the two literatures it would be possible to develop a viable methodology with which to undertake the empirical research.

By focusing initially on articles dealing with research in business ethics it was hoped to both learn from past research and avoid some of the problems encountered by others. With regard to the literature dealing with researching business ethics it became apparent that there were only a limited number of references which dealt directly with the subject.[1] Most of such articles reflected two main concerns, either identifying areas for future research, or identifying shortcomings in previous forays into the subject. Randall & Gibson (1990) observe that, at the time of writing, little was known about the quality of empirical research concerned with the ethical beliefs and behaviour of organisational actors. In reviewing ninety-four articles published in academic journals during the preceding thirty years they observed that over half of them lacked a full account of the methodology which was used. In addition they noted that without disclosing the methodological aspects of the research it was difficult to evaluate the significance of the findings (1990:460). They also remarked upon the absence of theory contained in the articles and were in general highly critical of the methodological approaches which were used.

Survey research appeared to be the most common approach being used in seventy-six of the articles reviewed, and convenience sampling was often used to determine the sample population. In addition, many of the surveys either asked respondents direct questions or made use of scenarios or vignettes.

The format of the questions presented problems in that Randall & Gibson noted that there was often a tendency for the researchers to use "close-ended questions", with the result that the respondent did not have to devise a solution for the situation s/he was presented with, merely having to evaluate those which were presented to him or her.

A serious problem with such an approach is that of vagueness and generality, the ethical issue or problem not being sufficiently contextualised.

One effect of this is that it is difficult for the researcher to discover the thought-processes by which the respondent analyzed the situation.

Another important problem arising from the use of such research methods is that ethical or unethical decision-making and behaviour within an organisational context is not purely a result of the individual values of the respondent. Contextual factors such as the influence of work-colleagues and managers, the variety and efficiency of control mechanisms, and hence the probability of detection, may play an important part in determining actual behaviour.[2]

When one takes such observations into account the extent to which the use of scenarios or vignettes, when divorced from the real-life context of the respondent, can provide the researcher with an accurate account of the ethicality, or otherwise, of the respondent must be open to serious doubt. There is a high probability that what one would obtain would be the espoused-values of the respondent rather than the values-in-use (Argyris, 1990). Randall & Fernandes (1991) make a similar observation when noting that there is the danger that the findings from such research will suffer from "social desirability response bias" (1991:805). Respondents will either tell the respondent what they think they wish to hear, and/or will seek to present themselves as being more ethical than they are in practice. The very sensitivity of research into ethics may present serious problems of validity for any research relying upon questionnaires and scenarios.

Even where such vignettes and scenarios might be designed with a greater amount of contextual detail and realism one cannot escape the fact that one would be presenting respondents with a case-study of ethical dilemma which is divorced from the real-life organisational context in which they are required to work.

Another problem with such an approach is that the very nature of the scenario may distort the validity of the findings. The fact that such vignettes are presented to the respondent as having an ethical component to it will influence the way in which respondents deal with it. As Toffler observes such an approach,

> has not explored the important questions of what managers themselves perceive to be ethical concerns, why they see them as such, and where, in their perceptions, these problems come from.
>
> (1991:3)

Very few of the articles reviewed by Randall & Gibson made use of personal interviews in order to develop a more detailed understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.[3] It is not clear whether this was due to the constraints of time and cost, or whether it reflects the sensitivity of the subject under investigation. It is possible that some respondents may prefer

the relative anonymity and impersonality afforded by using a questionnaire as opposed to a face-to-face interview, but that is thought to be unlikely. As well as encountering the problem of non-response to questionnaires, there is no reason why respondents should be more honest in their replies, even if one can overcome the limitations of the questionnaire design itself.
A number of researchers working in the area of business ethics have commented upon the particular problems arising from the sensitivity of the topic to would-be respondents.[4] Jackall for example recounts how he was refused access to thirty-six corporations during his research, which as he remarks was itself an "instructive experience" (1988:13). Another indicator of the problematic nature of the subject is the observations of a number of writers regarding the lack of ethical discussion by managers within their working environment.[5] Such observations suggest that the manner in which one presents the nature of the research to potential respondents is particularly important.

Goodpastor, in distinguishing between descriptive ethics, normative ethics, and analytical ethics (1983:3) suggests that it is possible to "describe" the values and moral obligations that individuals and organisations subscribe to as a part of a neutral presentation of their attitudes and beliefs. Such an approach would be "neutral" he contends, in that there would be no attempt to evaluate such beliefs, merely to identify and record them. While such an approach may reflect the objective of the researcher, it is difficult to avoid the strong possibility that potential respondents may assume some "normative", i.e. evaluative element to be either unavoidable, or part of a hidden agenda on the part of the researcher.

One possible way of overcoming this problem would be to disguise the true purpose of the research and not reveal to respondents that one was undertaking research into their ethical beliefs and practices. Such an approach could be defended on the grounds that in making one's intent apparent one might be jeopardising both the content and the validity of the findings.

This approach was rejected by the author on the grounds that it was both potentially dangerous and also dishonest. Given that the initial organisation which was selected for investigation was located in the same city, on the grounds that it facilitated access, there was always the possibility of "leakage". Some members of the organisation were themselves engaged in research and had some contact with other members of the university. There was the possibility that informal conversation might result in the true nature of my research being uncovered which might have seriously jeopardised the quality of any relationships that I managed to develop with respondents, as well as putting my continued presence in the organisation at risk. In addition, on a personal level it was felt that to engage in such research by the use of deception was not acceptable. To research ethics by the use of subterfuge was too uncomfortable a contradiction.[6]

Taking account of the criticisms made of the use of both questionnaires and vignettes both those approaches were discounted as a means of accessing respondents' ethical beliefs with any reasonable hope of accuracy. The use of conducting prior interviews in the hope that the information collected might facilitate the construction of a more effective questionnaire was also rejected on the grounds that there would still be the problem of non-response, and also the danger that the interpretation which respondents placed on the questions would be different from that intended. This might have been due to deficiencies in the wording of the questions, or by intentional design on the part of the respondent as a means of avoiding disclosing pertinent, but personally embarrassing information.

An alternative method could have been to adopt what Goodpastor (1983) describes as a "normative" approach. This would have involved adopting an evaluative approach to the subject matter by interpreting the information provided by respondents by reference to one or more normative ethical theories. While this may have in some respects simplified the process, in that one could have used the interpretive framework provided by the theories. This approach was rejected for a number of reasons.
Firstly, as Derry & Green (1989) point out, the process of applying normative ethical theories to the analysis of real-life problems is not entirely straightforward. In reviewing the ways in which ethical theory is used in the business ethics literature they identified nine different ways in which the theories were used, which suggested a considerable degree of inconsistency. There would also have been the question of which ethical theories to make use of[7] . While the authors indicated that they found that in most cases the theories were classified under the headings of either "consequentialist" or "nonconsequentialist" there are important philosophical differences which would have had important practical implications for how one evaluated and made sense of any particular behaviour. In order to make an effective use of this approach it was felt that it would have been necessary to have had a far better understanding of the various theories than possessed by the present writer.

Even if one had attempted to avoid opting for either a consequentialist or nonconsequentialist interpretation one would have then been involved in what Derry & Green describe as "methodological pluralism". This approach avoids deciding which of the two School of thought is "correct", and seeks to employ both approaches in analyzing a given situation. Such "theoretical dualism" has been developed by Cavanagh et al (1981) as a way of indicating how it may be possible to combine various normative ethical theories together as a means of evaluating the ethical implications of political behaviour within organisations. While such an approach may be frowned upon by ethicists for devaluing the differences which exist between the theories, it could be countered that such a pluralistic approach at least tries to reflect the fact that individuals are not always ethically consistent in their behaviour. Regardless, however, of the merits and demerits of such a pluralistic approach, it was again rejected on the grounds that the writer did

not possess the requisite knowledge and skills to employ it with any likely degree of success.

In effect, it became increasingly apparent that as an individual researcher the present writer did not have the necessary knowledge to adopt a normative approach to the subject. To have adopted anything other than a descriptive approach would have considerably increased the likelihood of serious errors occurring during the analysis of the information collected.

Given that my initial research into the business ethics literature had identified the increasing importance being given to modelling the organisational context within which individuals were located as a means of identifying the variety of situational factors which may influence individual behaviour and attitudes it became increasingly apparent that it would be necessary to adopt a similar, contextualist approach to the research.

While it may have been possible to make use of one of the models developed by researchers in the field, e.g. Trevino (1986), or Bommer et al (1987) and in effect, "test" the accuracy and applicability of the model, this was rejected on the grounds that they were concerned primarily with identifying the factors influencing the individual decision-making process within an organisation. For such an approach to have been viable it was felt that it would have been necessary to not only identify a particular decision-issue relevant for a number of individuals, but also for those respondents to have been very forthcoming in terms of both their time, and the quality of information provided.

## Adopting a Contextualist Approach

The eventual decision to develop a contextualist approach to business ethics by seeking to develop the perceived linkages with organisational culture stemmed from a number of factors. Firstly, a number of business ethicists had noted the interrelationships without developing the issue in any great detail.[8] Secondly, Jackall's Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers (1988) appeared to both emphasize and illustrate the extent to which the cultural milieux of the organisation mediates the ways in which ethics are both enacted and expressed within the work environment. What seemed to be lacking in Jackall's account however was any detailed theoretical analysis of the cultures present within the organisations he studied.[9] Thirdly, the inclination towards such an approach was strengthened by a personal interest in the literature on organisation culture. Fourthly, reflecting at the time, it appeared that a "gap" existed in the academic literature dealing with this subject which provided the opportunity for making an original contribution to knowledge - providing an attractive and tempting opportunity to a Phd student.[10]

Another factor which reinforced the inclination to develop the linkages between organisational culture and business ethics was the writing of

Goodpastor. Not only had he, like other business ethicists, identified different levels of analysis; person; organisation; and system (1983), but in Toward an Integrated Approach to Business Ethics (1985) he observed that,

> people, organisations, and systems do not come separated neatly in life. They are inevitably and inextricably linked.
>
> (1985:170)

In setting out the "Moral Fractal Principle" (1985:172) he suggested that all three levels of analysis were related to each other and had to be analyzed and understood in such a context. While on the one hand this reinforced the attraction of attempting to understand the nature of individual ethics within the context of the cultural milieux of the organisation, it also indicated the need to complement any such analysis by an appreciation of the environment within which the organisation was situated.

As indicated above, the author became increasingly inclined towards adopting a descriptive approach to the subject, due to both his academic background, which was sociological, and the concerns regarding the utility of either vignettes of questionnaires. This was further reinforced by a consideration of Kohlberg's (1969) theory of cognitive moral development.

Building upon the work of Piaget, Kohlberg developed a six-stage model:

| | |
|---|---|
| | Level 1 - Preconventional |
| Stage 1 | The individual views rules as being imposed, and existing external to him or her. |
| Stage 2 | The individual internalises the shared moral norms of relevant others, such as family, or peer group. |
| | Level 2 - Conventional |
| Stage 3 | The individual is concerned with interpersonal trust and gaining social approval. |
| Stage 4 | The individual broadens his or her perspective, one's moral judgments takes account of the rules and laws contained in legal, religious and social systems. |
| | Level 3 - Principled |
| Stage 5 | The individual begins to consider the possibility of changing existing laws and rules of behaviour |

in order to improve society in some specified way.

Stage 6 — The individual feels able, and obliged to live by his/her own ethical beliefs and, when the situation is felt to require it, will live by such personal principles rather than those of society.

As Trevino (1992:446) notes, Kohlberg's model has gained considerable support over the years, and the methods used to measure an individual's level of cognitive moral development have been developed and refined by a number of researchers.[11]

A number of researchers have addressed the issue of whether Kohlberg's model and methodology can be used to determine managers' moral reasoning within an organisational context (e.g. Trevino, 1986; Derry, 1989; Weber, 1990). However, as Nielsen (1988) has observed,

> For both philosophers and managers reasoning with ourselves and others can be used both as (1) a way of knowing (epistemology) what is ethical and (2) a way of acting (praxis) to help ourselves, others and organisations behave ethically. However, for many of us, knowing is frequently not the same as acting.
>
> (1988:725)

Such an observation is reinforced by Trevino's observation that recent research has indicated that moral reasoning may vary depending upon the context (1992). This suggests that how one thinks about an issue may be influenced by one's understanding of the context within which one is situated.[12] Such a contention receives some support from Weber's (1990) study of thirty-seven managers. When faced with three ethical dilemmas, two of which were located within a business context and the third outside, it was found that the reasoning level of the two business-context dilemmas was lower than that of the non-business dilemma.[13]

Trundle (1989) reinforces the importance of contextualising any attempt to analyze and attempt to understand the way in which individuals both think about ethics, and how they subsequently behave in observing that business ethics are located within a,

> living praxis - it involves a lived network of relations in companies that typically includes fear, respect, contempt, and loyalty up and down as well as across the "chains of command"; friendships, hatreds, cooperation, admirations, and familiarities which melt down stark distinctions between the private and corporate "self"
>
> (1989:263)

The additional implication here is that in order to understand how the individual thinks about and interprets particular events one has to reject the traditional approaches which emphasize the impersonal "rationality" and "objectivity" of the individual and seek to understand the subjective and emotional context within which the individual subjectively interprets and makes sense of any particular event or issue.[14] In effect, such observations reinforce the need to utilise a contextual model by which to understand the processes by which the individual both makes sense of and evaluates the particular situation within which s/he is located.

As indicated in an earlier chapter, a number of writers have developed such models which vary in both their complexity and the specific issues and organisational variables which they draw attention to.[15] What such models exemplify, in varying degrees, is a recognition of the importance which organisational culture plays in influencing the decision-making processes of the individual actor. What is not made clear is the way in which such writers think about, and conceptualise the cultural milieux of the organisation which they represent in their models of the individual's decision-making process.[16] Equally important, such models provide no means of understanding how the individual decision-maker makes sense of his or her cultural and situational context.[17]

For example, Fritsche (1991), in acknowledging the importance of organisational culture for decision-making adopts a definition of culture very similar to that of Schein (1985).

> Organisational culture may be referred to as the common set of assumptions, beliefs and values which has developed within the organisation to cope with the external and internal environment and which is passed on to new members to guide their actions with respect to these environments - culture in our model serves as the glue binding the organisation together in common identity and actions. It influences the thoughts and feelings of the decision-maker and provides a guide for behaviour.
>
> (1991:844)

The above quotation could be interpreted as indicating that the writer is using an Integration model of organisational culture, a model which has been criticised for both its over-simplicity and its managerial bias - although one must stress that it is just that, an interpretation.

While such models of the individual's decision-making process and context seek to clarify the complexity of the situation, Liedtka (1991:543) in contrast, acknowledges the complexity inherent in such situations by indicating that the individual is often confronted by ostensibly conflicting organisational

values with regard to how they should behave in any given situation.[18] One important question which arises from this is whether such individual decision-making models are able to capture the complexity of the decision-making milieux, particularly when it is perceived as being a process rather than a act occurring at a particular point in time?

Writers such as Phillips (1991) stress the need to understand organisational reality as it is understood by the individual who is required to act and make decisions within the context of the organisation's social and cultural milieux. In drawing attention to Goffman's (1959) metaphor of the actor playing a role, he suggests that there is a degree of self-consciousness on the part of the individual that s/he is playing a role,

> The role is compartmentalised, a part of the self but relatively separate from other roles performed in other settings.
>
> (1991:791)

Such an observation is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it both supports, but also extends Carr's (1968) analogy of business as a "game". Secondly, it draws attention to the need to understand how the "rules" of the game are not only created through the interpersonal processes of organisational interaction (Trundle, 1989), but are also amenable to negotiation by the individual in terms of how s/he both interprets and enacts the specified role.[19] Thirdly it indicates how an individual's personal beliefs may not be expressed in actual behaviour where perceived organisational constraints, whether in the form of formal rules, or informal belief systems are believed to articulate and encourage differing values. Such observations are particularly important when viewed in conjunction with Jackall's (1988) study of managerial morality.

Jackall was concerned to identify the way in which practising managers thought about ethics in a "real-life" working context and identify the,

> moral rules-in-use that managers construct to guide their behaviour at work.
>
> (1988:4)

In adopting an explicitly sociological approach he appears to lend support to both Carr's metaphor of business as a "game" regarding the way in which individuals set aside their own, personal beliefs and follow the "prevailing morality of their particular organisational situation" (1988:6). Likewise he contends that managers do not normally discuss ethics with each other and that,

> Actual organisational moralities are - contextual, situational, highly specific, and, most often, unarticulated. (1988:6)

In identifying a hybrid form of bureaucracy, which he terms "Patrimonial Bureaucracy" (1988:11) he contends that individuals survive, and sometimes prosper, by seeking favour with, and not offending one's superiors and by learning to function effectively within the "fealty and alliance structure" (1988:45).[20]

In a somewhat similar manner to Philips (1991) he suggests that individual managers are very conscious of the tenuous nature of their organisational position and that they are engaged in acting out a self-conscious "role" within the organisational arena. He suggests that such managers are concerned to ensure that,

> one not only displays correct appearances, social finesse, and the proper attitudes but one always reflexively examines one's performance, as if glancing in a mirror. -
>
> The very nature of their work numbers managers among the great actors of our times; they rarely, however, receive credit for their thespian abilities because their best performances take place not on front stage but in the corridors and back rooms of their bureaucratic warrens.
>
> (1988:61)

In addition, Jackall contends that the managers he interviewed during his research did not operate according to pre-defined normative standards of ethical behaviour. Such an observation provides another reason for not attempting to re-define or interpret individuals' ethical belief systems within the conceptual classifications provided by normative ethical theories. There would appear to be a danger of imposing an order and interpretation upon what would appear to be a more complex and inconsistent expression of beliefs and values.

Such concerns are reinforced by Jackall's later observation that the moralities of his managerial respondents were "always situational, always relative" (1988:101). In emphasizing the pragmatic approach which managers adopt to their work situation he is concerned to emphasize their ethical "flexibility", and hence the problems of attempting to establish any definitive classification of an individual manager's moral, or ethical position. According to Jackall, a manager's ethical stance is not only issue-specific but also situationally-specific in that one needs to take account of the political context in which the issue becomes the focus of attention.[21]

Jackall's study also appears to agree with the findings of such writers as Bird & Waters (1987); Waters & Bird (1987); and Kram et al (1989) regarding the observation that managers do not normally explicitly discuss ethics as part of their occupational discourse. A possible explanation for this

is that as Jackall observes, Mannheim (1936:118) noted that bureaucracy turns political issues into administrative concerns, adding that,

> Bureaucracy transforms all moral issues into immediately practical concerns. -
>
> As a matter of survival, not to mention advancement, corporate managers have to keep their eye fixed not on abstract principles but on the social framework of their world and its requirements. Thus, they simply do not see most issues that confront them as moral concerns even when problems might be posed in moral terms by others.
>
> (1988:111)[22]

Jackall's study is perhaps the most clearly sociological investigation of the nature of managerial ethics and his account illustrates the difficulties encountered in attempting to locate the analysis within the dynamic and ambiguous nature of the prevailing politico-cultural dynamics of the organisations concerned.[23] One thing which sets the study somewhat apart from other research into business ethics is Jackall's use of semi-structured interviews in order to acquire a more in-depth analysis of the respondents' interpretations of their working environment.[24] However, although the study involved four different organisational cultural environments the findings are presented more as a composite analysis of the overall findings rather than as discrete case studies.

In addition, one might criticize the study for, in a sense, containing little direct content relating to the actual ethical beliefs of his respondents. One response to this however, would be that this was never Jackall's intention, and that he was not concerned to interpret his findings in terms of normative ethical theories. Rather, his analysis, by drawing attention to the pragmatic, flexible, nature of his respondents' beliefs, throws doubt on the accuracy and validity of any such attempt.

Jackall's study serves to illustrate many of the methodological problems involved in undertaking qualitative research into the "real-fife" aspects of business ethics. The sensitivity of the topic is illustrated by the fact that thirty-six corporations refused to participate. This is all-the-more remarkable when one remembers that the research was undertaken in America where business organisations are generally noted for displaying a more overt and active interest in the subject than their British counterparts.

## Summary and Conclusions

In reviewing the evidence provided by the research literature on business ethics several issues become apparent. Firstly, the use of both vignettes and survey techniques cannot be guaranteed to provide an accurate insight

into the beliefs and thought-processes of the participants and respondents. Secondly, it is important to locate any research findings within a contextual analysis of the work environment within which respondents are located. Thirdly, such an analysis would have to take account of the cultural and political milieux within which the respondents are situated. Fourthly, semi-structured interviews would seem to offer the best means of obtaining the subjective data necessary for analysis. Fifthly, the use of a case study approach provides the means of both bounding the research and providing a basis for contextualising the analysis of the information provided by the respondents.

In addition however, it is also necessary to acknowledge the limitations of the research. While business ethics is an interdisciplinary field of study, as Kahn (1990:313) points out, the way in which it is developed reflects the disciplinary background and strengths and weaknesses of the individual researcher. A sociologically-oriented approach towards the subject cannot, by itself, hope to deal effectively with all the pertinent issues surrounding the study of business ethics. However, it may afford particular insights which other disciplinary-based approaches are less well-equipped to pursue.

Interviewing thirty-two researchers in the field of business ethics, Kahn observed that their academic disciplinary background was varied and that the researchers,

> maintain ties to the concepts and methods of their primary discipline not only because of their training and lack of ready alternatives, but also because of their uncertainty about what an evolved field of business ethics would contain.
>
> The confusion and fears reflect the difficulty of working in a field that is neither strictly normative nor descriptive but exists at some as yet unknown place in between.
>
> (1990:313)

The sociological background of the present writer is reflected in his concern to adopt a descriptive rather than prescriptive approach to the research. In addition, both the review of the literature, and his own predilections encouraged a concern to both undertake qualitative research through the use of semi-structured interviews and to contextualise their information within a cultural analysis of the chosen organisation. It was such concerns that prompted a concern to consider the research literature relating to both organisational culture and ethnography in the hope that it would offer further insights and guidance as to how the research should be undertaken.

## Organisational Culture and Ethnographic Investigation

### Researching Organisational Culture

The variety of theoretical approaches available for the study of organisational culture has already been remarked upon. The concern here is with the question of how one might actually conduct empirical research into the subject and what guidelines were available from the academic literature. From the literature studied it was found that what advice was offered tended to be quite pragmatic in terms of indicating when to undertake the research, who to interview, and also what might be investigated.

Louis (1985) suggests that it is useful to identify individuals who experience high levels of contrast, i.e. those who have dealings with a number of groups within the organisation. Such individuals will have contact with a number of organisational subcultures and will therefore have access to a considerable amount of information as the content of the various subcultures will be highlighted by the contrasts made between the various subcultural groupings.[25] In addition, she also recommends that newcomers to the organisation should be interviewed in order to obtain their impressions of the prevailing organisational culture.[26]

The timing of the study can also be important, some periods being more advantageous than others. It has been suggested that it is easier to study the cultural milieux of an organisation during periods of change (Wilkins, 1983), disruption (Pettigrew, 1979), or crises. It is then that the taken-for-granted beliefs and hidden assumptions may become more apparent and therefore more amenable to identification and analysis. Schein (1984) suggests that one should study reactions to "Critical Incidents" that have occurred during the organisation's history. The general assumption is that in times of uncertainty and stress individuals' deep-seated beliefs and assumptions about themselves, their work group, and organisation are more readily articulated and hence able to be discerned by the researcher.[27]

The question of what to study, that is which particular components or articulations of the culture also requires consideration. Writers such as Louis (1985), Meek (1988) and Sackmann (1991) comment on both the size and complexity of "organisational culture" as a concept and the difficulties involved in studying it holistically.[28] How one chooses to delimit the investigation, or as Louis expresses it, "slice the culture" (1985:82) will influence the nature of the information collected, and also influence the way in which it is analyzed.[29]

In this respect organisational culture, perceived as an academic concept is somewhat paradoxical in that it symbolises both order and complexity. As a way of analyzing organisations it is concerned both to indicate the short-comings and distortions inherent in other approaches to organisational

investigation such as functionalist or systemic analyses, but as Morgan (1986) observes, it too has its deficiencies.[30] The very concern to acknowledge the complexity and diversity of the cultural milieux of an organisation necessitates the imposition of some form of analytical order as a means of enabling the study to be undertaken and the findings to be presented in a manner comprehensible to the reader. This may be undertaken through the use of cultural typologies as a means of providing a heuristic map by which the reader can distinguish between the various cultural groupings identified,[31] or by what Sackmann (1991) refers to as the "Components" and "Dimensions" of culture.

The "Components" of culture comprise the formal analytical concepts which the researcher uses to study culture. Such analytical constructs as artifacts, beliefs, espoused values, values-in-use, norms, rites and rituals provide the means by which the researcher imposes his/her interpretive analysis upon the otherwise descriptive accounts provided by respondents. The "Dimensions" of culture provide a framework within which organisational culture can be studied, such as those provided by Schein (1983:16) as constituting the "basic assumptions" of culture.[32] As Sackmann observes in reviewing the literature on organisational culture,

> the use of these concepts seems, at times, arbitrary because some authors use, for example, values in the same way that others use beliefs or vice versa. -
>
> The meaning of norms as rules of behaviours is relatively clear but not the specific meanings of values, beliefs, and assumptions.
>
> (1991:24)

Such analytical confusion among researchers reflects the very complexity of the concept. It also indicates that such analytical concepts, while providing a means for the investigation of organisational culture, are also a conceptual filter affecting what is observed and how it is interpreted. While the "social scientific" status of the concepts allows the researcher to generalise from the findings of specific research locations in terms of either testing and refuting or refining existing theory, or generating new theoretical constructs, they are themselves constructs of the social science community. The fact that, as Sackmann observes, there is uncertainty and inconsistency in how they are utilised reflects the current state of knowledge and practice among social science researchers. It reflects the earlier observation that the study of organisational culture is not only paradoxical, in terms of the concern to impose meaning and order upon a complex phenomenon, but that it is also polemical and contentious with regard to the reasons and purpose of such studies.[33]

As if to compound the complexity of the subject matter even further one must also acknowledge the contradictions inherent in the recommendation to study organisational culture during periods of change and upheaval. While such change may, it is contended, help the researcher to uncover certain expressions of the organisation's cultural milieux it simultaneously complicates this process in that it necessitates uncovering expressions of individual and collective thoughts and meanings during a period of uncertainty and change. The implicit assumption inherent in such an approach is that individuals have a consistent set of attitudes, beliefs, and values which can be identified through the analysis of recorded conversation and the interpretation of behaviour. Not only is there the assumption that this can be discerned and unravelled by the researcher, but that there is some core of human consistency and permanence to be uncovered and which affords some insight into the nature of the contemporary human condition.

Even if one accepts the presence of conflicts of interest among organisational members, and the presence of uncertainty, ambiguity and contradiction in periods of environmental turmoil and the dynamic processes of organisational change and transformation through the adoption of Meyerson and Martin's use of three consecutive paradigms for analyzing organisational culture: Integration, Differentiation, and Ambiguity, there is still the belief that one can discern meaning and order out of the cultural maelstrom that is organisational life.

There is a need to acknowledge the complexity of the individual actor. Just as there is the need to acknowledge that the ethics of the individual do not neatly reflect one or other of the normative ethical theories, there is also the need to acknowledge the complexity of human thought and behaviour. The cultural paradox inherent in the desire to understand the vagaries and inconsistencies of organisational culture is that the ability to undertake such a task is both limited and distorted by the conceptual limitations and personal abilities of the researcher qua researcher.[34]

There is the uncomfortable realisation that researching organisational culture entails the researcher adopting a position of privilege in that one is concerned to provide an insightful and meaningful analysis of organisational life that is somehow both reflective of, but also a succinct and orderly composite expression of, the collective intersubjective thoughts and beliefs of the individuals studied.

While being aware of such problems hopefully prevents the researcher from adopting both too prescriptive and arrogant an approach to the task of research it is still not easy to discern any straightforward solution to the responsibilities of the researcher as both reporter and analyst. However faithfully and accurately one wishes to record the culture of a given organisation through, for example, the use of ethnography, as Van Maanen observes,

> An ethnography is written representation of a culture (or selected aspects of a culture). It carries quite serious intellectual and moral responsibilities, for the images of others inscribed in writing are most assuredly not neutral.
>
> (1988:1)

In Tales of the Field Van Maanen is concerned to draw attention to the problems involved in the presentation of an ethnographic account. While it was felt that the constraints of part-time research made such an approach inappropriate in the present circumstances, many of the issues raised by ethnographic researchers are relevant for the analysis of organisational culture through the use of semi-structured interviews.
Commentators on the ethnographic method such as Hammersley & Atkinson (1983), Clifford and Marcus (1986), Van Maanen (1988), Fetterman (1989) and Hammersley (1990, 1992) are concerned to identify the problems of such an approach. In particular they are concerned to draw attention to what Van Maanen refers to as "Realist" accounts where the researcher enjoys "interpretive omnipotence (1988:51), that is where the researcher has the final say in how a particular culture is to be analyzed and presented to the reader. In describing such an approach as the "Doctrine of Immaculate Perception" (1988:73) Van Maanen succinctly identifies the danger of the researcher imposing his own interpretation upon the data, rather than providing an account of the variety of meanings which his respondents may have concerning the situation under investigation.
Clifford contends that,

> Even the best ethnographic texts - serious, true fictions - are systems, or economies, of truth. -
>
> Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial - committed and incomplete.
>
> (1986a:7)

Any attempt to analyze the ethical aspects of an organisation's cultural milieux must of necessity suffer from similar limitations in that the ethical beliefs and behaviour of the respondents will be expressed and/or inhibited by the cultural beliefs and modes of behaviour found within the organisation.[35]

Crapanzano (1986:51), in providing a critique of Geertz's essay "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight", also makes a pertinent point when observing that any such analysis of necessity reflects the particular conditions pertaining at the time of the investigation. This has an important bearing upon the study of organisational culture, particularly if one accepts the advantages to be derived from studying the phenomenon during a

period of change. Unless one can study the process of change from its inception through to completion, a difficult, if not impossible, task given that many contemporary organisations appear to be experiencing a process of continual change and adaptation in response to environmental pressures, any such study is bound to be both partial and influenced by the particular contextual circumstances prevalent during the period of investigation.[36]

In a second paper Clifford (1986b) also draws attention to the problematic nature of interview data contending that,

> Both informant and researcher are readers and re-writers of a cultural invention.
>
> (1986b:116)

Such an observation draws attention to the fact that "the interview" is an institutionalised process of research methodology which is learned by the researcher. The conducting of interviews during the process of research whether, formal or informal is a socially constructed exchange of information between individuals.[37] The assumption that by developing a "good interview technique" one can elicit more "true" information is overly optimistic. Van Maanen (1983) observes that there are at least three reasons why researchers may be misled. Firstly, the respondent may desire it, either to cover up what are felt to be personal failings, or to prevent the disclosure of a "rotten apple" within the organisation. Secondly, the researcher can be misled owing to the fact that the informant is wrongly informed about certain matters. Thirdly, the researcher may be unintentionally misled due to the informant being unconscious of the implicit meanings and understandings associated with a particular situation or event.[38]

The more one reads the literature on research methodology the more it becomes apparent that unless one becomes, in Junker's (1960) terminology a "Complete Participant" where one's activities are concealed from respondents, one will always be perceived by others as a "researcher" which will affect the nature of the information that is provided. This realization was important regarding how the empirical research activity was conducted and it is appropriate at this point to briefly outline the background history of the research process as it unfolded.

## Contextualising the Research

The initial objective had been to locate the research in an organisation undergoing both structural and cultural change, in order to facilitate the identification of the cultural milieux within which the respondents were located. A Trust Hospital was identified which met such criteria through a part-time student who held a senior position in the hospital. The hope was by using her as a "gate-keeper", or "point of access", her senior position within the managerial structure would facilitate access. Unfortunately due to

pressure of work, she was eventually forced to drop out of the course and the contact was lost, and with it two months of expectant hope.
A second opportunity then provided itself through a personal friend who worked for the Regional Health Authority. It transpired that he had contact with the Director of Human Resources at one of Sheffield's Trust Hospitals and he volunteered to approach the Director on my behalf when he thought it opportune to do so.[39]

Eventually, my meeting with the Director to discuss the possibility of access took place and appeared to go well, or so I thought at the time. He undertook to discuss my proposal with his colleagues and to get back to me in the near future. Believing that I had successfully tackled the first hurdle in gaining entry I returned to my office to await developments - and waited, and waited, and waited.

To cut a long story short, it eventually became apparent that I had been unsuccessful, and that I had "lost" some six months before being officially informed that I would not be allowed access. As my chief supervisor expressed it, I had been the subject of a polite, and prolonged, "cooling out" process.[40] It was in the aftermath of this second failure that it was decided that in order not to lose more time in additional, and potentially unsuccessful, attempts to obtain access to an external organisation, that the research could be conducted within Sheffield Business School.

The decision to become an "internal researcher" precluded any idea of disguising the purpose of the research as my interest in business ethics was widely known. The problem for me as researcher was not as Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) express it that I would "Go Native" and come to uncritically adopt the norms and values of the workplace, but that I was already a "native". In Schutz's (1964) terminology, the challenge was to become "the stranger" and to be able to perceive the workplace with an appropriate degree of detachment and interpret the data collected through the responses provided by the interviewees.

Another issue which could not be avoided was that I would be interviewing respondents who were known to me and who already held personal views concerning me as a fellow member of staff. How this might influence the interview process was initially unclear but could be expected to have some effect upon the proceedings. Given the history of the Business School, the particular Campus where one was situated could be expected to influence how one was perceived, and might also influence individuals' willingness to participate.

Given that the intention was to undertake a "descriptive" rather than "prescriptive" approach to the study of the ethical aspects of the Business School's cultural milieux the concern was not to make explicit use of any pre-existing model of ethical behaviour available from the business ethics literature but rather to use the Business School as a case study to seek to

develop a more detailed understanding of the relationships between business ethics and organisational culture.[41] In seeking to adopt a nominalist rather than realist approach however, one is forced to acknowledge the difficulties that this entails.

With reference to ethnographic research, Van Maanen notes that the intention is to uncover the "logics-in-use" of the informants, rather than impose an external logic through the use of a hypothetico-deductive approach. However, how one moves from what he terms "first order concepts" - the informant's understanding of what is happening - to the "second order concepts" of the researcher is problematic. Essentially one is required to acknowledge that such second order concepts are "interpretations of interpretations" (1983:40). Whether one can be truly inductive during such a process is doubtful. As Glaser & Strauss observe,

> the adequacy of theory for sociology today cannot be divorced from the process by which it is generated.
>
> (1967:5)

With regard to the study of business ethics and organisational culture, both of which have extensive literatures, it is unrealistic to suggest that the researcher is truly inductive, and can become something akin to a Tabula Rasa, or "blank slate" prior to undertaking empirical research. The very fact that one has identified a subject for research implies that one already holds certain ideas and beliefs about the subject matter. Rather than being a "blank slate" the researcher is already "imprinted" or influenced by the literature consulted. What one is concerned not to do is to undertake the research in order to confirm or refute pre-constructed hypotheses. Although Glaser & Strauss refer to the use of "sensitizing" concepts as a means by which the researcher can facilitate the research process, one is inclined to the belief that how one makes sense of the data collected from informants will be heavily influenced by the sociological background of the researcher. Whenever one attempts to undertake some form of analysis of the data one is inevitably transforming the "emic" or informant's perspective, to the "etic", in this case sociological perspective.

The use of a case study approach to investigate business ethics is somewhat unusual, although Brigley (1995) supports its use as a means of uncovering the contextual relationships between the ethical beliefs of individuals and behaviour (1995:222). The strengths and weaknesses of case study research in general have been discussed by a variety of writers regarding the selection and design of the case study, and the generation of theory.[42] Yin (1989) identifies four basic types of case research and the one adopted here is the single-case study. Yin contends that a single-case study approach is appropriate where it either presents a "critical case" for the testing of a well-formulated theory; an "extreme or unique case" which is therefore worth analyzing and documenting; or where it is "revelatory",

providing the researcher with an opportunity to analyze a previously hitherto inaccessible phenomenon (1989:46).

There are however, other situations, according to Yin, where the single-case study approach may be appropriate, such as when it is used as an "exploratory device" as a prelude to further study (1989:49). The original intention was to use the Business School as a single-case study in order to investigate respondents' accounts of the cultural milieux of the School as a means of contextualising their particular expressions of ethical concern. In practice, the original idea of using the Business School as a case study of meso-level analysis was only partially fulfilled in that the actual undertaking of the empirical research, combined with an ongoing process of reflection and supplementary reading resulted in a change in the focus of the research which necessitates some additional clarification.[43]

**Reflecting upon the process of theorizing the thesis**

Initially, it is necessary to acknowledge that the argument developed in the first two chapters - the need to understand both the way in which business ethics has developed as an academic subject, and the changing nature of the business environment, of which business ethics is both an expression of and a reaction to - is, in part, a consequence of the empirical research process.

The general argument developed by the preceding chapters is, in effect, a post-rationalisation of what was initially a somewhat hap-hazard process of reading one's way into the business ethics literature. That the descriptive approaches to the subject appealed so strongly to the writer reflects his sociological background, and the concern to impose some form of meaning and comprehension to an otherwise somewhat alien area of knowledge. This can be seen by a consideration of the preceding chapters.

The first two chapters provided an account of the ways in which business ethics as a subject of both academic research and practical application has evolved. In particular, the concern with corporate codes of ethics and conduct, as a way of institutionalising ethics within the organisation has been identified as symbolizing the managerial concern with both extending their control of employee behaviour and providing a response to external criticism of business behaviour. Likewise, the concern with whistleblowing illustrates the concern to both account for, and potentially control the expression of individual beliefs and values where they may be at variance with those desired by the employing organisation. In focusing attention upon these two examples of business ethics it is also necessary to acknowledge the tension which exists between the theoretical/philosophical dimension of the subject and the pragmatic concerns of practitioners to apply such knowledge in ways which can be viewed as constructive within the context of a free-market economy.

Both such expressions of business ethics require to be contextualised within an account of the cultural milieux of the organisation within which they are located. In this respect it was contended that the concomitant concerns with organisational culture and business ethics as they developed during the nineteen eighties were not entirely coincidental. Both organisational culture and the concern to institutionalise ethics reflect uncertainties regarding both the ability of management to comprehend, motivate, and control employees whilst simultaneously facilitating innovation, creativity and flexibility within the workplace by encouraging employees to identify more closely with their employing organisation.

The concern expressed by some business ethicists to account for the ethical or unethical behaviour of actors within a contextualist analysis reflects an important development within the subject area. In particular it reflects the concern to move away from purely normative and prescriptive accounts which tend to be judgmental and evaluative of individual behaviour and seek to understand the sociological and psychological factors which influence individual thought processes and behaviour. It is not surprising that such concerns required an increased interest with the concept of organisational culture. As such, it can be contended that both the content and development of business ethics as a socially produced area of knowledge and application is both a product, and symbolic of, the present era.

From the point of view of the author, uncovering such concerns within the business ethics literature helped to locate oneself as belonging to the "descriptive" rather than "prescriptive" camp. It also provided a means of orientating the research towards a more sociological approach. In doing so however, it is necessary to acknowledge that this necessarily limits the research focus in that it thereby developed a distinctly disciplinary focus. However, the advantage to be derived from such an approach is that it provides the means of locating the object of study within a pre-existing theoretical literature which provides the means of accounting for the phenomenon of business ethics.

Within the context of the research process, such developments within the business ethics literature prompted a desire to look more closely at the relationship between business ethics and organisational culture.[44] Initially, as indicated above, the concern was to seek to provide an account of individuals' ethics through an analysis of the cultural context within which they were located. It was this concern which provided the impetus for the empirical research which is presented in the following chapters.
It is probably a truism that the best way to understand the methodological problems of empirical research is to involve oneself in doing it. For the author, this proved to be very much the case, prompting the realisation that reading about the processes of doing research is not the same thing as actually undertaking it. Recounting the process by which the author prepared for the act of empirical research indicates the way in which he

gradually came to realize that while his initial approach was flawed, the research process itself, provided the impetus for a re-appraisal and subsequent re-orientation of the thesis.

Initially, the concern had been to seek to understand the way in which an individual's ethical beliefs can be viewed as an expression of the context in which s/he is located - hence the desire to look at the ways in which organisational culture mediates the ways in which the ethics of the individual is expressed. In adopting such an approach the concern was to focus attention at the meso-level of analysis as identified by Goodpastor (1985). The hope was that by developing an analysis of the cultural context within which the respondents were located, one would acquire an understanding of the ways in which the respondents' cultural milieux affected the ways in which they both identified ethical issues within the workplace and the forms in which they were expressed.[45]

In reality, what developed was essentially a "descriptive" analysis of the data which was collected. As a means of verifying the accuracy of the analysis of the interview data respondents were provided with a copy of the draft-analysis and invited to comment on the content. While those who did so appeared to be in broad agreement with the findings, one respondent, while congratulating the author on the general comment, followed this up by inquiring where the ethics were?

At the time, such a comment was noted, but then dismissed by the author, in retrospect it became apparent that the observation was both pertinent and insightful. The desire to avoid a prescriptive approach to the subject, while reflecting the desire to develop an interpretive approach to the subject, also proved to be a serious weakness in that one lacked an analytical framework within which to identify the ethics of the individual respondent unless one used the conventional framework provided by either consequentialism or deontologicalism.

When the initial analysis of the interview data was undertaken the predominant concern was to find some means of imposing some form of order upon some two hundred pages or more of recorded transcript. What developed was essentially a descriptive precis which sought to account for the views expressed by the respondents by an analysis of the changing work environment of the Business School. It was the gradual realisation of this that prompted a reappraisal of the nature of the research.

The immediate means by which this was facilitated was a reappraisal of the literature relating to organisational culture and its application to the object of the empirical research - Sheffield Business School. Several writers on organisational culture had identified different levels of analysis and the importance of contextualising the focal organisation's culture within a broader context.[46] The link between theorizing about the analysis of organisational culture and the process of undertaking empirical research

was reinforced by the realisation that any analysis of the Business School needed to locate it as being one part of Sheffield Hallam University. In addition, in seeking to understand the concerns identified by respondents it became increasingly apparent that some issues were the result of government interventions to the tertiary educational sector.

While it would have been possible to contextualise the findings of the empirical research within such an analytical framework, the realisation of the need to "contextualise the context" within which the respondents were located, prompted another train of thought entirely. If it was necessary to contextualise the analysis of organisational culture, then such an analysis was also appropriate to business ethics.[47]

The initial impetus for such an approach was reinforced by considering contemporary debates concerning how best to comprehend the contemporary era - modernity or postmodernity - and the content of much of the management literature relating to organisational change and the need for managers to come to terms with ongoing environmental uncertainty.[48]

Once this train of thought was started, it became apparent that both the concern with organisational culture and business ethics, as they developed during the nineteen-eighties and nineteen-nineties were symbolically important in that they reflected uncertainties regarding both the nature of contemporary business behaviour, and how such behaviour could be understood.

The realization that it was necessary to contextualise the contemporary interest in both business ethics and organisational culture required a theoretical framework which could provide an explanation for both phenomena. While the manner in which was undertaken is the subject of chapter six, it is the process of undertaking and analyzing the empirical research which is the subject of the next two chapters.

## Notes

1. See for example: Langholm & Lunde (1977); DeFillippi (1982); Fleming (1987); Moser (1988); Derry (1989); Phillips (1991); Trevino (1992); Robertson (1993); and Brigley (1995).

2. Writers such as Trevino (1986); Bommer et al (1987); and Stead et al (1990) have sought to identify such contextual factors in modelling the decision-making process.

3. Only seven out of the ninety-four.

4. See for example, Jackall (1988); Victor & Cullen (1988) and Liedtka (1991).

5. See for example: McCoy (1985); Waters et al (1986); Bird & Waters (1987, 1989); Waters & Bird (1987) and Kram et al (1989).

6. Whether the desire to be honest and above-board was the reason for my failing to gain access to my initial choice of organisation is uncertain, as the reasons for my rejection were never made known to me. At the time I recall being more upset by the length of time it had taken them to say "no".

7. To have adopted any one normative theory as a means of evaluating respondent's behaviour would have been assuming a position of privilege in which the researcher maintains that s/he is in a position to identify and apply the "correct" criteria for the analysis and evaluation of any action.

8. See for example, McCoy (1985); Pastin (1988); Carmichael & Drummond (1989). Sinclair (1993) provides an important exception in that she develops a theoretical approach to understanding the relationships between organisational culture and ethics.

9. In retrospect, given the problems he encountered in gaining access to conduct his research such an apparent omission is understandable. At the time of reading his book however, it was perceived as an important omission.

10. With the benefit of hindsight it is now apparent to the author that both the "gap", and the means of filling it, were not as nearly straightforward as appeared at the time.

11. See e.g. Rest (1977); Gibbs & Widaman (1982); Basinger & Gibbs (1987).

12. Trevino observes that:

"Because situational cues are salient in real situations, moral judgments in these situations can be expected to be lower that they are in hypothetical dilemma situations that are less personally involving." (1992 : 450)

13. Such findings would seem to lend some support to Carr's (1968) contention that there appear to be one set of rules for behaviour when at work, and another set of rules for when not at work. However, it is also necessary to take account of Beversluis'(1987) observation that unlike other games where participation is essentially voluntary, participation in business, for the majority of individuals is of a "non-voluntary character" (1987:82). As such it can be argued that Carr's "game" of business is significantly different from other competitive games.

14. Such a contention receives some support from Phillips who notes that,

    "Real life ethical issues do not arise in a fashion which allows them to be insulated from the ebb and flow of everyday life. - This complex environment provides the backdrop within which ethical issues are encountered and managed. It is, in short, the reality of everyday organisational life." (1991 : 788)

15. See for example, Ferrell & Gresham (1985); Trevino (1986); Bommer et al (1987); Jensen & Wygant (1990); Stead et al (1990); Fritsche (1991); Strong & Meyer (1992); and Knouse & Giacolone (1992).

16. For example, it would be useful to know whether the authors of such decision-making models conceptualise the organisational milieux in terms of Meyerson & Martin's (1987) typology of: Integration; Differentiation; or Ambiguity.

17. Toffler (1986) could be said to be an exception here in that her conceptual models are derived from her analysis of her respondents' accounts of their personal ethical dilemmas. Having said this, however, it is not clear whether her respondents would have modelled their stories in a similar fashion.

18. Such value conflict Liedtka contends can arise in three ways: the need to accommodate mutually exclusive values; differences between espoused values and the values-in-use; and political conflict between superior and subordinate.

19. In this respect Phillips' analysis is similar to Golden's (1992) contention regarding the ability of the individual organisational member to challenge the constraints and pressure towards conformity exerted by the organisation's cultural milieux.

20. One issue which arises from Jackall's study is whether his characterisation of "Patrimonial Bureaucracy" to describe the

organisational milieux of his respondents and its effects upon their behaviour is specific to certain organisational structures and types. It is interesting to consider whether an investigation of a "flatter", network organisation might produce a different set of findings?

21. Jackall's findings may help to explain why organisational whistleblowers tend to be perceived, and treated negatively by their employing organisations (See e.g. Parmerlee et al, 1982; Hauserman, 1986; Jensen, 1987; Greenberger et al, 1987; James, 1990; De George, 1990; Miceli & Near, 1992). By their very nature, whistleblowers adopt a particular ethical stance which according to Jackall would be in opposition to the ethical relativism or ethical pragmatism identified in his managerial respondents.

22. Such a view appears to be supported by Toffler's study and the distinction she draws between an "issue" and a "dilemma",

> "As managers talked about ethical problems in their work, it was clear that what they were describing were dilemmas, situations in which they were faced with a difficult choice and where no clear-cut answers existed. These dilemmas contrast with the way ethical concerns are usually voiced at the organisational level, both in the writing of formal policy and in the informal expression of company values. At the policy level, ethical concerns were appropriately addressed as issues where the right course of action is prescribed. Recognising what constitutes that difference is critical to understanding manager's ethical concerns at work." (1991 : 20)

23. Brooks (1991) criticises the study for not taking the effects of corporate codes of ethics and conduct into account. While such a comment may be justified, Jackall's study would seem to raise questions regarding the impact which such codes may have upon managerial behaviour when working within a competitive and complex organisational environment.

24. The 143 semi-structured interviews with managers from "Weft Corporation", "Alchemy Inc.", its parent "Covenant Corporation" and "Images Inc." took between two and three hours each. Forty of the respondents were re-interviewed, and some interviewed for a third and fourth time.

25. Louis (1985) suggests that researchers should interview consultants, staff members, newcomers, and other researchers.

26. While interviewing organisational newcomers can help to identify some of the taken-for-granted assumptions of the prevailing culture it is also necessary to acknowledge that there are also problems with such an approach. Firstly, their views are influenced by their own past

experiences. Secondly, their analysis of the culture may be influenced by their location within the organisation, and the duration of their current employment. Thirdly, their interpretation and evaluation of the cultural milieux may be affected by the way in which they are treated by longer-term incumbents. First impressions may be modified by time and experience.

27. In contrast, it is also possible that due to the nature of organisational politics, respondents become more guarded in their observations and more politicised in their behaviour, thereby complicating the researcher's task.

28. Louis observes that the study of organisational culture is,

> analogous to the Sufi story of the blind men's efforts to decipher the elephant.
> (1985 : 82)

Sackmann describes it as a "multifaceted and multidimensional concept" (1991:150)

29. As Sackmann (1991) observes, it will reflect something of the way in which the researcher conceptualises the concept in order to impose meaning and order to the inherent complexity of the concept.

30. Such as paying insufficient attention to the role of power and politics within organisations which influence the way in which individuals interpret and make sense of their work environment.

31. The danger being that either one "fits" the organisational culture being studied into a pre-existing cultural type, and/or in creating a typology one both exaggerates the differences between the types identified, and creates a model in which the different cultural types are clearly differentiated from each other. This last point is indicative of Meyerson & Martin's "Differentiation paradigm" of organisational culture,

> "Each subculture becomes an island of localised lucidity; ambiguities lie only in the interstices among the subcultures" (1987 : 633)

32. Schein's basic assumptions which are reflected by organisational culture are: the organisation's relationship with the environment; the nature of reality and truth; the nature of human nature; the nature of human activity; and the nature of human relationships (Schein, 1983:16).

33. The distinction made by Smircich (1983a) between the study of organisational culture as a "root metaphor" or as a "variable" as a means of distinguishing between different approaches to the study of

organisational culture, and the purpose of such studies, exaggerates the differences between the two approaches. The analysis of organisational culture is a socially constructed process the outcomes, or products, of which will be utilised by others irrespective of the intentions of the researcher. Knowledge regarding organisational culture is a commodity which will be utilised in ways not necessarily intended by the researcher.

34. It is said that it is a bad workman blames his tools. When applied to the process of organisational research it is possible to contend that the researcher as "workman" is himself a "product" of his tools in that the way that one thinks about and undertakes research is a product of existing knowledge and academic convention. This does not excuse the bad, or incorrect application of such knowledge, but it does throw considerable doubt on the image of the abstract, or detached researcher who is somehow enabled to escape from the distorted prism of social existence through the construction and use of a different set of analytical constructs.

35. Clifford indicates the variety of ways in which ethnographic writings are socially determined and constructed representations of reality in observing that they are determined,

> "In at least six ways: (1) contextually (it draws from and creates meaningful social milieux); (2) rhetorically (it uses and is used by expressive conventions); (3) institutionally (one writes within, and against, specific traditions, disciplines, audiences); (4) generically (an ethnography is usually distinguishable from a novel or a travel account); (5) politically (the authority to represent cultural realities is unequally shared and at times contested); (6) historically (all the above conventions are changing). These determinants govern the inscription of coherent ethnographic fictions." (1986 : 6)

36. If a longitudinal study is not feasible, then it is becomes necessary to contextualise the study and locate its findings within a broader historical framework. What one records is both a partial and temporary account of the process of cultural change.

37. Gill & Johnson suggest that,

> "there is a need for the researcher to be "reflexive". Rather than - attempt to eliminate the effects of the researcher on the phenomenon under investigation, the researcher should attempt to understand his or her effect upon, and role in, the research setting and utilise this knowledge to elicit data." (1991 : 111)

While this is sound advice there is also the possibility that the interviewee is also capable of being reflexive and evaluating how s/he

believes the interview is progressing according to his or her criteria of evaluation.

38. Van Maanen observes that,

> Culture is itself an interpretation and therefore most of the facts one goes into the field to discover are themselves already known about and interpreted in a particular light by the people one talks to in the setting. The results of ethnographic study are thus mediated several times over - first, by the fieldworker's own standards of relevance as to what is and what is not worthy of observation; second, by the historically situated questions that are put to people in the setting; third by the self-reflection demanded of the informant; and fourth, by the intentional and unintentional ways the produced data are misleading. (1983 : 51)

39. In retrospect it was probably at this point that my naivety as a researcher, combined with a hefty dose of over-optimism on my part, began to influence proceedings. Content to wait for my friend to choose the moment, some four months passed before I finally met the Director.

40. From a personal perspective it would have been better if the refusal had been abrupt and rude. At least then I would not have sat waiting expectantly for so long. It was shortly after this that it occurred to me that while writers such as Louis (1985) and Schein (1985) suggest that periods of organisational change provide good opportunities for studying organisational culture, the internal political processes concomitant with the change may make gaining entry by the would-be researcher more problematic.

41. Brigley supports the use of case studies in business ethics research on the grounds that,

> Case study offers an alternative to the measurement of ethical behaviour, i.e., naturalistic generalisation which is rooted in the context of organisational cultures and economic systems. It results in enhanced conceptual understanding of the interaction between the ethical beliefs of individuals and corporate and market pressures on business decision-making. (1995 : 219)

One of the more interesting aspects of such an observation is the implied relationship between the meso and macro levels of analysis.

42. See for example, Yin (1981, 1989); Mitchell (1983); Eisenhardt (1989, 1991); and Dyer & Wilkins (1991).

43. While it might be contended that a Business School, as an educational institution, does not provide a good subject for research into business ethics, it should be borne in mind that changes in the educational system in recent years have necessitated the introduction of more business-like approaches to the management and control of such institutions, reflecting the increasing commodification of education.

44. The concern with relating business ethics to organisational culture was probably reinforced by the fact that the concept of organisational culture was also the subject of some of my teaching activity at that time.

45. With the benefit of hindsight it is now apparent that, in seeking to uncover such information through the use of semi-structured interviews, the nature of the information that was provided by the respondents did not necessarily reflect the ways in which such issues and concerns were publicly expressed within the workplace. At best, one was acquiring information concerning what respondents identified as ethical issues, not how they were articulated during the everyday discourse and social processes within the organisation.

46. See for example: Smircich, 1983a; Gordon, 1985, 1991; Alvesson & Berg, 1992.

47. Alasdair MacIntyre has provided an account of the evolution of ethical thought in a historical context through his A Short History of Ethics (1966).

48. Such concerns are expressed in a variety of management and organisational textbooks, e.g. Kanter, (1989); Pascale, (1990); Coulson-Thomas, (1992); Peters, (1992); Whittington (1993); Handy, (1994); Burnes, (1996); Tapscott, (1996).

# Chapter Four
# Researching Sheffield Business School

## Introduction

This chapter is concerned with providing the reader with a brief account of the history and development of Sheffield Business School. It then provides an account of the way in which the empirical research process was undertaken.

## Sheffield Business School

Sheffield Business School was established in 1986 but in order to understand the context within which it was formed one has to know something about the history and structure of the organisation of which it is a part.

Like others of its kind Sheffield Polytechnic was formed in the mid-sixties, developing over the years into one of the largest Polytechnics in Britain in terms of full-time and part-time students. Becoming Sheffield City Polytechnic in 1976 through the merging with other local colleges it was located at several sites throughout the city. The main building, and the centre of the Polytechnic's administration and management was based on the Pond Street Site which also included two rented buildings, Dyson House and Heriot House, all of which are located in the city centre. In addition, other main teaching sites were Psalter Lane, some three miles from Pond Street, Collegiate Crescent, about a mile and a half distant, Wentworth Woodhouse, some eight miles away, and the Totley Site situated on the southern side of Sheffield on the edge of the Peak National Park and some six miles from the city centre and Pond Street.

In recent years there has been a policy of centralising what in 1992 became Sheffield Hallam University. This has involved the sale of the Wentworth Woodhouse Site and the expansion and development of what is now Pond Street Campus into the main University location. This process is still ongoing and indicative of this is the recent sale of the Totley Campus and the decision to relocate Sheffield Business School to a newly-built facility on the Pond Street Campus. This process, due to be completed in the summer of 1997, will result in the Business School finally being located on one Campus. At present the Business School is located at both Totley Campus and Dyson House.

The provision of undergraduate and non-degree courses within the Business School takes place in Dyson House, which prior to the formation of the School was the location of the three departments which formed the nucleus of the School. The postgraduate degree courses, post-experience, and short-course provision is located at the Totley Campus. Originally a Teacher Training College, Totley is perhaps the most attractive of the

University sites. Straddling the divide between affluent residential development and agricultural land it is the nearest thing to a "green field" site possessed by the University.

The Totley Campus is currently the home for two of the University's twelve Schools, the School of Food and Leisure, and the postgraduate-arm of the Business School. Situated on sloping ground, Totley is divided in two by a road which also has symbolical significance. Both the School of Food and Leisure and the administrative centre of the Business School are located to the south of the road. This part of the Totley Campus is known as Highfield, the Business School's administration being housed in an attractive listed stone building known as The Old Hall. As one crosses the road and descends, one comes to Lowfield the other half of the Totley Campus, where the library and main teaching facilities for the Business School are located.

Both the geographical dispersal of the Business School and the disposition of the Totley Campus are relevant for an understanding of the findings from the empirical research. In addition, a brief account of the history leading up to the formation of the School is also necessary as it provides some explanation for the internal divisions within the School.

At the time of its creation, Sheffield Business School was what might be termed a "virtual" organisation in that it came into being at a time when the structure of Sheffield City Polytechnic was one of faculties and departments. It was not until 1989 when the Polytechnic was restructured into Schools, that the Business School took on something of its present format and composition. At that time, the core of the Business School was formed by the merging of three hitherto separate departments: Management Studies, the Department of Business Studies, and the Department of Public Sector Administration. In the interim period before the restructuring, members of staff who undertook activities on behalf of the nascent School were seconded from their departmental duties.

Of the three departments providing the core of the Business School only Management Studies was involved exclusively in the provision of postgraduate and short-courses for practising managers. The other two departments focused almost entirely on the provision of undergraduate and non-degree courses. Of the three departments it is probably true to say that it was the Department of Public Sector Administration that had, hitherto, undergone the most change. Initially designated the Department of Political Studies, the department had originally been based in the Faculty of Social Studies and located in a different building from the other two. In 1981 its then Head of Department had advocated and carried through a process of change resulting in the department becoming known as the Department of Public Sector Administration, and in 1984, a relocation to the Faculty of Business and Management thereby locating all three department within the same faculty.

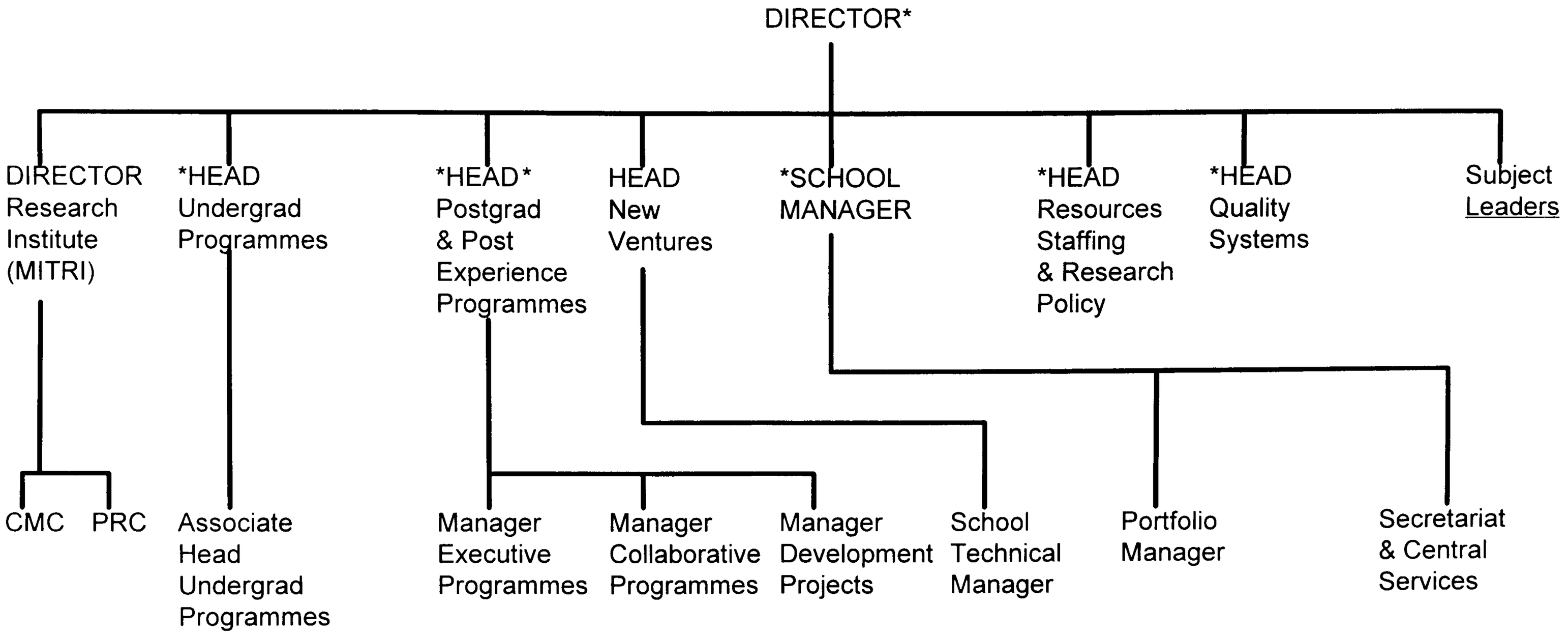
Two other aspects which have a bearing on the present composition of the School require to be mentioned. Firstly, prior to the formation of the Business School the Head of Department of Business Studies was Kevan Scholes. Originally a member of staff of Management Studies, his appointment as HoD of Business Studies was the subject of some controversy at the time as he was appointed in preference to internal candidates and resulted in a process of internal change and reorientation within the department. Secondly, prior to the restructuring, the Department of Business Studies comprised a number of disciplinary-based subject groups the main ones being, economics, marketing, and law. During the restructuring the lawyers were relocated and, along with the accountants formed the School of Finance and Law, which is currently based in Dyson House.

Two other developments which have taken place during the lifetime of the Business School are worthy of note. Firstly, the Business School, like other Schools within the University has developed teaching links with other European institutions, particularly in Eastern Europe and has become involved in the provision of postgraduate courses. Secondly, like the rest of the "New Universities" Sheffield Hallam University has become increasingly concerned to develop research activities to supplement its teaching activities. Within the Business School, research activity is organised in terms of "Research Centres" of which their are currently two. The Change Management Research Centre is based in the Old Hall at Totley and the Policy Research Centre is located in the Sheffield Science Park which is on the Pond Street Campus, near to but separate from Dyson House. Both research centres are themselves part of the Management Information Technology Research Institute (MITRI), an inter-School research centre concerned to coordinate research activity within the University.
Since its inception Sheffield Business School has been the largest of the thirteen Schools which were formed as a result of restructuring the Polytechnic in 1989. Since then, one has been dissolved and re-merged into the remaining Schools and, at the time of writing, there are discussions taking place regarding the merging of the Business School with the School of Finance and Law. While such an act would provide a more appropriate combination of disciplines for a Business School it would inevitably increase staff numbers.

The structure of the Business School is best described as a matrix one overseen by a variety of managerial responsibilities. A indication of the School's executive roles is provided in the following diagram (See: Figure 1).

SHEFFIELD BUSINESS SCHOOL

## EXECUTIVE TEAM & OTHER SENIOR ROLES




*School Executive

*Figure 1*

The two arms of the matrix comprise the various courses provided by the School on the one hand, and Subject Groups on the other. Following its formation, and as a means of integrating members of the departments which formed the nucleus of the School, six Subject Groups were formed. Each member of staff was a primary member of one Subject Group and could be a secondary member of one other Group. The six Subject Groupings were: Human Resource Management and Organisational Behaviour; Decision-Making; Corporate Strategy; Marketing; Public Sector Management; and International Business. To some extent these groupings reflected the activities of the old Departments, but at the outset there was a deliberate policy of encouraging individuals to change their old allegiances as a means of developing a more integrated School.

Having provided a brief outline of the historical background and structure of the Business School one can now begin describing how the research process was undertaken.

**Setting up the Case Study**

When it became apparent that the attempt to gain entry to the Trust hospital had been unsuccessful an interview with Kevan Scholes the Director of Sheffield Business School resulted in permission to undertake the research with the School. Kevan informed the members of the School by memo that he had granted me permission and shortly afterwards I circulated a more detailed account of the intended research and invited members of the School to volunteer their cooperation.

Given that a large number of staff already knew of my interest in business ethics no attempt was made to disguise the fact that the focus of the research was concerned with the interrelationships between organisational culture and business ethics. Both memos stressed the voluntary nature of the research and that there was no compulsion upon staff to participate if they were disinclined to do so. My memo was circulated to both academic and administrative members of staff on both sites and, given the potentially sensitive nature of the subject, also stressed that both the confidentiality of participants would be respected and that all the interviews would be personally undertaken by the researcher.

The original intention had been to wait until a reasonable number of respondents had volunteered to take part and then to construct a suitable sample population to be interviewed. Fifteen members of staff quickly volunteered to take part and this was followed by a more gradual stream of staff members expressing an interest in participating. In all, thirty-six individuals volunteered, although it became apparent that the composition of the would-be participants was significant.

The fact that the researcher was himself a member of the School since 1989 and personally acquainted with most members of the School is a factor that must be considered as potentially influencing the composition of the research population. It is certainly possible that membership of the School may have influenced both the numbers and composition of those agreeing to take part. Some may have volunteered out of friendship and a wish to "help out", while others may have been deterred by that fact. Of those volunteering to participate there were only two or three who could be classified as virtual "strangers" to the researcher.

Another factor that must be considered is whether being a member of the School affected the nature of the information provided to the researcher during the interviews. While assurances were made regarding the respondents' concerns for privacy and confidentiality, there is still the possibility that personal knowledge of the researcher may have influenced the nature of the information that was provided.

There is no reason why a respondent should necessarily perceive an internal researcher as being more trustworthy than someone not associated with the School. Indeed, there may be more reticence in speaking about some issues of personal concern where it is felt that the interviewer will remain as a personal reminder of what may come to be seen as a personal indiscretion. The provision of information relating to what is felt to be unethical behaviour may be less likely if it is personally embarrassing to the respondent. Likewise, there may be concern that information given under the "sacred canopy" of interview confidentiality, may at some future point in time be put to alternative use if interviewer and respondent happen to "fall out" with one another.

Given that the research population was self-selected it was disappointing to realize that only one member of the administrative staff had agreed to take part. From both personal observation and communication it had become apparent that there were some significant differences in attitudes and perceptions between academic and administrative staff concerning the nature of the Business School and it had been hoped to have been able to reflect this through the construction of the sample population to be interviewed. The possibility of recirculating the memo to administrative staff was considered. In addition the idea of approaching some of the administrative personnel who were personally known to the researcher was also considered but rejected on the grounds that to do so would have been an abuse of personal relationships and may have also distorted the nature of the data collected in unforeseen ways. Regretfully the decision was taken to exclude the one volunteer from administration from the research population.

## The Research Population: Constructing an Order

In retrospect, the decision to interview all thirty-five members of academic staff who volunteered to take part was a mistake. As well as prolonging the interview process, it aggravated the time and effort required to transcribe the interviews and complicated the analysis of the transcripts. At the time, however, it was felt that a larger research population would increase the representativeness of the sample and provide a richer seam of data for analysis.

The original idea had been to adopt Schein's idea of the clinical iterative interview whereby the participant is interviewed, the data analyzed by the researcher, and the analysis returned to the interviewee for discussion and as a means to elicit further information. The time and effort involved in personally transcribing the interview tapes effectively excluded this idea from being implemented. At the time it was believed to be important to assure respondents that the recorded interviews would be personally transcribed by the researcher and not a member of the administrative staff. This was believed to be important given the potentially sensitive nature of the interviews and would reduce any chance of information leakage. It was hoped that providing such reassurance would increase the propensity of respondents to talk more openly during the interview.

Given that thirty-five members of academic staff had volunteered to take part, the question of how to categorize the population for the purposes of analysis became important. The original idea had been to identify a sample from each of the "old" departments. However, on reflection this was felt to be inappropriate given the present structure of the School. It would also have meant imposing a classificatory scheme before beginning an analysis of the data provided, thereby influencing the process of interpreting the information provided. In addition it would have imposed an unduly "historical" emphasis into the research, taking no account of the realignment of staff since the formation of the School. In giving perhaps undue significance to the continuation of "departmental cultures" it would have both ignored the significance of departmental subcultures and also those who had either, like myself, entered the Business School from other departments, and also those who had joined the School since its inception. Similarly, focusing attention on old departmental ties and alliances, while not entirely unimportant, might have detracted attention from other potentially significant factors, such as length of service, and the sex of the respondents.

After some consideration, the decision was taken to divide the respondents into two groups reflecting their length of service with the institution. This decision was prompted by a consideration of the composition of the interview population and the realisation that, in terms of length of service, there appeared to be a natural division among the sample. On the one hand there was a group of staff who had all been members of the institution prior

to 1989. Indeed a number of this group had over twenty years service, and the "youngest" member of the group had commenced employment in 1987. In contrast, all those comprising the second group had taken up service no earlier than 1989 - the year in which the School took on its present form. This resulted in the creation of two sub-sets which were identified as the "Old Guard" and "Newcomers and Part-timers". In addition the Old Guard were sub-divided in terms of their previous departmental membership, although this was not used as a subsequent basis for analysis. Numerically this resulted in the following groupings:

**Old Guard**

| | |
|---|---|
| Management Studies | 9 |
| Business Studies | 6 |
| Public Sector Management | 6 |
| Total | 21 |

**Newcomers and Part-timers**

| | |
|---|---|
| New Full-time Staff | 8 |
| Part-time/Researchers | 6 |
| Total | 14 |

One other fact is worthy of mention at this point as it may have affected both the composition of the research population, and the data that was provided during the interviews. Of the twenty-nine full-time members of academic staff who agreed to take part, twenty-one of them were based at the Totley Campus. This is significant given that the researcher is himself based at Totley, and that the two locations of the Business School - Totley and Dyson House - represent a significant division of function within the School between postgraduate and undergraduate activities. It is undeniable that, in terms of their numbers, the Dyson House staff are under-represented in the interview population. This is further reinforced by the fact that all six of the "Part-time/Researchers were also based at Totley. There is a strong suspicion on the part of the researcher that this self-selected bias is important in that it reflects two factors which affected the composition of the research population. Firstly, it reflects the influence that personal knowledge of the researcher played in inclining respondents to take part. Secondly, it reflects the degree of mistrust and social distance which exists between the staff on either site - something which is reflected in some of the interview data dealt with in the following chapter.

## The Interview Process

The interviews themselves took place over a period of some six months, commencing in late November 1993 and being completed by mid-May 1994. Given the heavy workloads and teaching commitments of staff every attempt was made to comply with respondents' requirements and preferences concerning both the timing and the location of the interviews. This was done not only out of a sense of gratitude that they had agreed to take part, but also in the hope that agreeing to their requests would improve the ambience of the interview and the nature of the information provided. The interviews themselves were, for the most part, conducted in the respondent's office, although a small number selected to be interviewed in my office at Totley. This was usually on the grounds that they either shared an office, or, if located on another site, that they happened to be visiting the Totley Campus and were happy to fit the interview in with their schedule.

Originally, the intention had been for the interview to take the form of an open-ended, unstructured interview during which the interviewer would endeavour to direct the conversation towards a number of issues felt likely to be pertinent to the research. The hope was that such an approach would avoid the potential problems of utilising an overtly structured interview schedule, namely the risk of unintentionally leading the interviewee and by implication influencing the nature and content of the responses.

Given the potentially sensitive nature of the interview it was felt that it was important to try and ensure that the atmosphere during the interview would be both informal and friendly. An interview schedule had been designed on which it was hoped to record responses during the course of the interview as a means of facilitating the process of analysis. At the commencement of the interview the respondent was thanked for agreeing to participate and was once again reassured that the information provided during the interview would be dealt with in a confidential manner and that nothing that the respondent might say would be personally attributable to him or her during the writing-up of the findings.

The interviewee was then asked if they objected to the interview being recorded on tape, it being emphasized that the transcription would be undertaken by the researcher, and not by a third party - especially by anyone connected with the Business School. They were also told that they could request the tape-recorder to be switched off at any point during the interview if they wished. It was felt necessary to emphasize this as in previous research undertaken by staff the tapes had been transcribed by members of the administrative staff.

None of the thirty-five respondents objected to the proceedings being recorded on tape. On only two occasions during the interviews did a respondent request that the tape-recorder be switched off. This occurred when the respondent felt that a particularly sensitive issue was being

discussed. Even then, the two parties involved did not object to notes being taken at that point during the interview so the particular issue was not lost.

**Learning as One Goes**

Having set out with a set of preconceived ideas about how the interview process should proceed, initial experiences prompted modifications to the process. This reflects a learning process on the part of the researcher, and the realisation that undertaking empirical research is somewhat different from reading about it.

After the first two or three interviews two things became increasingly apparent. Firstly, the way in which an interview progresses is influenced by the interaction between the interviewer and the subject. Initially, the concern was to try and avoid unintentionally influencing the respondent either by the tone of voice or by conscious or unconscious use of body language or facial expression. Unfortunately, while such attempts at interviewer neutrality may have its advantages in certain situations, when adopted while interviewing one's work colleagues the disadvantages quickly became apparent.
The initial interviews were undertaken with a self-conscious desire on the part of the researcher not to influence the respondent. The result was to emphasize the fact that the interview process was an "unnatural" act and to increase the self-consciousness on the part of both parties. When discussing issues between two working acquaintances it became apparent that, when providing some piece of information, or offering an opinion on an issue, the respondent looked for some sign of recognition or approval from the interviewer. It soon became apparent that any attempt by the researcher to remain undemonstrative during the interview only resulted in encouraging hesitancy and uncertainty on the part of the respondent.

The second revelation which quickly became apparent was that the kind of information that was sought from respondents was not necessarily immediately forthcoming during an informal interview. The initial interviews prompted several unsolicited comments from respondents regarding the complexity of the issues which respondents were being invited to comment upon. The first three interviews were conducted with the interviewer using a prompt sheet by which he attempted to direct the respondent towards what were hoped to be fruitful areas of discussion. It became apparent that when confronted with a question such as,

> How would you describe the culture, or way of working, of the Business School to a newcomer, or to an outsider?

the respondent required some time for reflection before s/he was able to compose a considered response. When all three of the first interviewees commented that it would have been useful if they had had more time to think about their responses it became apparent that it would be necessary to modify the format of the interviews.[1]

Rather than continuing as before it was felt that it would be more helpful to the respondent, and more beneficial for the researcher, if interviewees were provided with a number of thought-provoking questions prior to the interview. The remaining thirty-two respondents were therefore provided with the following information:

Dear XXX,

As part of my Phd research I am interested in gaining an understanding of the culture of Sheffield Business School. I realise that asking you questions during an interview on what for most people are quite complex issues does not give you much time to give a considered, reasoned reply, so I hope that by giving you the questions before meeting you will give you an opportunity to reflect about the issues that I am interested in.

1. How would you describe the working environment, and work climate of Sheffield Business School to a newcomer, or stranger?

2. Do you think that your working environment/climate has changed in any particular way since the Business School began operations, and if so can you describe what form these changes have taken?

3. From a personal perspective how would you evaluate these changes?

4. What are the values which are expressed or espoused by the School?

5. In your opinion, what effect do these values have upon your personal behaviour and activities while at the School?

6. In your opinion, are you conscious of any contradiction existing between the espoused values of the Business School and what actually happens in practice?

7. Are you personally aware of any organisational practice or occurrence within the Business School which has given you cause for personal concern or anxiety, e.g. an issue of equity or unfairness, or personal autonomy?

Thank you for your help.

Cheers,

Ken Smith

The above communication was sent to respondents immediately after arranging a time and date for the interview. The time gap between arranging and undertaking the interview was approximately one week, although on a few occasions several weeks passed before conducting the interview.

At the beginning of those interviews care was taken to assure the respondent that the questions were intended to be more indicative than prescriptive in nature. It was explained that they could be dealt with in any order by the respondent and that if it was felt that one or more of the questions overlapped with one another then they could be dealt with in a composite manner by the respondent.

While the intention had been to prevent the printed questions from determining the course of the interview it is undeniable that the majority of respondents chose to address the questions in order of presentation. While such a situation leaves one open to the charge of leading the respondent, or at the very least influencing the course and content of the interview, it is believed that the potential disadvantages of such an approach are outweighed by the opportunity which it provided to respondents to give a more considered response.[2]

**The Questions and the Questioner**

The seven questions used to generate the interview data, were as indicated earlier, not intended to be viewed as prescriptive by the respondent. The generally open-ended nature of the questions was intended to leave it to the respondent to determine the nature of their response. There was, however, an intentional emphasis in the design of the questions to indicate that it was the respondent's personal, subjective, interpretations and thoughts that were being sought. In addition, there was an underlying rationale behind both the questions and their order of presentation.
Questions one-to-three were concerned with uncovering the respondent's views about the changes which had taken place since the establishment of the School. The invitation in question one, to describe the working environment to a newcomer or stranger, provided a focus for the respondent, and also hopefully encouraged a reflective perspective on the part of the respondent. Question two, sought to elicit more detailed information on the precise nature of perceived changes since the establishment of the School.

It is worth noting, in passing, that while most respondents interpreted this to mean from 1989 onwards, for most people marking the "real" establishment of the School, and the beginning of their association with it, officially the School was established in 1986. For a few respondents, their involvement and identification with the School was from 1986, which in a sense marked them out as being among the "Founding Fathers" of the School. As will be seen, this distinction may have some relevance when it comes to

interpreting the differing accounts and evaluations of the changes which have taken place.

Question three served to re-emphasize the fact that the concern was to gather information concerning their subjective perceptions regarding the nature of such changes that were seen to have occurred over the seven-to-four year period, and was also designed to encourage clarification and elucidation of issues identified in responses to questions one and two. No respondents failed to either identify, or comment upon the nature, of perceived changes occurring within the School. In other words, no respondent considered the work environment to have remained static.

Question four represented a change in focus to some extent. For one thing, it appeared to reify the School. This apparent "sociological gaff" was in fact intentional. It was concerned to achieve three things. Firstly, it was concerned to encourage the respondent to conceptualise the School as a holistic entity, in order to encourage them to identify the more ostensibly important, and publicly expressed values manifested by members of the School. Secondly, to the extent that it was expected that at least some respondents would spot the reification, it served to encourage them to comment upon the internal hierarchies of power, and informal groupings, within the School. Those respondents who did not comment upon the reification in question four, were still able to comment upon the potential importance of informal groupings and inequalities of power in their responses to questions six and seven. Thirdly, in inviting the identification of the values held among members of the School, question four sought to identify both the "mix" of values that were present, and also something of the way in which they were prioritized. The potential for value-conflict and their possible resolution, being explored in question six.

Question five was concerned with two issues. Firstly, it sought to elicit information regarding the extent to which the respondent agreed with and identified with the values expressed in responding to question four. As such, it provided some indication of the extent to which respondents were conscious of either a personal compatibility with such espoused values, or, were conscious of a distinction existing between their personal values, and the ones which they identified as being predominant within the working environment of the School.

Secondly, the reference to "personal behaviour and activities" contained in the question was concerned to take some account of the distinction made in the literature on organisational culture and culture management, between "compliance" and "commitment" - the extent to which individuals may behave in ways which they believe are expected of them by their organisational superiors, but which do not necessarily reflect their personally held beliefs. In terms of the interview questions, additional information concerning such differences was encouraged by the use of questions six and seven. In terms of making sense of the data, one of the categories which arose from reading the transcripts was provided by one respondent

who spoke of individuals having "coping strategies" in order to cope with the pressure of work within the School.

Question six sought information regarding possible value-conflicts or contradictions arising from the response to question four. In addition, it invited comment, and personal evaluation concerning the informal practices perceived to be taking place during the performance of work activities within the School.

Finally, question seven was concerned with achieving two objectives. Firstly, it acted as a form of check on the responses to questions four and five, whilst encouraging the provision of additional information. Secondly, it was designed to provide an intentional reference to the subject of ethics by explicitly inviting respondents to think about "an issue of equity or unfairness". Such an explicit reference to specific ethical issues could, as indeed one respondent remarked, be viewed as leading the respondent, and therefore influencing the content, and validity, of the information provided.

Such an observation is valid, but in the context within which the interviews took place, its potential injurious effects were hopefully minimal. In the first case, it was common knowledge within the School that the research was concerned with exploring the relationship between organisational culture and business ethics, and secondly, the initial letter to members of the School, seeking volunteers for interview, had made explicit the interest in business ethics. In the context of the interview situation, the explicit reference to equity and unfairness in the last question was intended to serve as a final reminder or prompt to respondents regarding the area of interest, rather than indicate a sudden change of focus. It may be worth noting that only one respondent declined to provide any response to question seven, even though, he had raised issues relating to equity and fairness in his responses to the earlier questions.

The questions, in their content and sequence, reflected a deliberate attempt to elicit information from the respondents using an open-ended question format, while also seeking to provide a means of both checking on the validity of earlier questions, and also encouraging the provision of additional information. While such an approach may reflect aspects of a more deductive approach to the use of well-defined, structured questionnaires, including the use of "check questions" to confirm the honesty of earlier responses, this was not the intent on this occasion.

For one thing, the questions were deliberately intended to be open-ended and inviting reflective conversation and response on the part of the interviewee. In addition, there was no attempt to prescribe how the respondent chose to interpret any of the questions, e.g. there was no formal definition provided of a "value" in question four. Likewise, it was left to the respondent to decide how s/he might interpret "equity" in question seven.

While such an approach is hopefully beneficial in that it helps to avoid the dangers of information-bias arising from the use of structured questionnaires, it cannot avoid them entirely. Any question, however "open" or "unstructured" is open to the potential charge of either surreptitiously or unintentionally leading the respondent - probably both.

Any interviewer is involved with influencing the conduct of the interview to some extent. The questions utilised here were intended to "guide" rather than "lead" the respondent into considering certain aspects of the working environment, or organisational culture of the School. In certain respects, as indicated, they were also intentionally iterative, in that the questions were not intended to be "self-contained", requiring separate, individual responses - a fact which presents certain challenges when it comes to analyzing and interpreting the data that was provided. For example, it does mean that it is not necessarily appropriate to simply seek to compare and contrast the answers provided to a particular question by different respondents. Some respondents, for example, chose not to provide replies to the individual questions, but rather "merged" their responses to, for example, questions two and three, or questions five and six.

In addition, the fact that the questions were intended to be iterative, does not necessarily mean that they will be perceived, or dealt with, as such. Likewise, there can be no guarantee that where such iteration is perceived to occur by respondents, that it necessarily takes the same format as that intended by the interviewer.

**On Being an Internal Researcher**

In terms of being an internal researcher, this was found to be something of a "mixed blessing". While this may have deterred some potential respondents from taking part, it may have encouraged some to have been more open in their comments in the belief that there is a greater understanding and empathy existing between the two parties involved. As the interview schedule progressed it became apparent that some respondents were being quite candid and open regarding their thoughts about the School and that some care would be required in "writing up" the research to ensure that some quotes, if used, would be unattributable.[3]

On the other hand, there were a few occasions when it became apparent that the respondent was being particularly circumspect in their responses. This took a number of forms. An absolute refusal to answer a question was extremely rare - occurring only once. Likewise requests to turn off the tape-recorder only occurred twice during the interviews.

More common was the use of the open-ended nature of the interview process being used as a means of taking control of the interview as a means of determining what information would be provided. This was partly

an expression of the inexperience of the interviewer, but there were occasions when it was found to be very difficult, if not impossible, to guide the respondent back to what was felt to be more "fertile" lines of enquiry. In addition, there were a few interviews where it was felt that the respondent was intentionally avoiding expressing a personal viewpoint by using the third person - "he" or "they" - to depersonalize their replies. This may have merely been a mechanism by which the respondent sought to reduce the potential embarrassment of dealing with potentially sensitive issues arising during a face-to-face interview with a fellow member of staff, but there is some doubt as to whether this was the main reason. There were two interviews where it was felt that the respondent appeared to be relatively reluctant to provide information, particularly where it might appear to imply criticism of the School and its members. It was noticeable that those interviews were of shorter duration than the rest.

Any interview process, however skilfully conducted, is open to criticism that the interviewer is "leading" or "guiding" the respondent and therefore influencing the nature of the information that is provided. On the other hand, and especially in the case of the inexperienced interviewer, there is the nagging doubt that the "surreptitious cunning" of the former, in seeking to delve the complex depths of respondents' values and beliefs located within a organisation's cultural milieux, is at times opposed by the "devious cunning" of the respondent.

**Recording and Transcribing**

In the enthusiasm to get on with the empirical research after the previous disappointments and delays, priority was given to arranging and undertaking the interviews with the result that the process of transcription was postponed. When the process of transcribing the tapes was eventually begun, two things quickly became apparent. Firstly, it took far longer than thought to transcribe the tapes. Secondly, spending many hours at time working with a keyboard and VDU screen can be very stressful on the eyes.

The amount of time required to transcribe the interview tapes reflected the realization of the amount of data that had been gathered during the interviews, combined with the challenge of making some kind of sense from the data. Initially, the belief had been that it would be possible to listen to the tapes and transcribe "edited highlights" on to disk for subsequent analysis. Such an approach proved inappropriate for several reasons. Firstly, from a methodological point of view, it was realised that to engage in editing at this stage would be at best premature, and also methodologically unsound, as it would mean that utilising an "editorial prerogative" would involve an implicit, and subjective, interpretation of the data itself.

It would involve both the selection and categorisation of the data in order to identify what would be taken to be useful or interesting information. While any eventual categorisation of the data would involve the identification and

codification of "useful information", and as such would involve the imposition of subjective meaning upon the respondents' interview-data, it was felt that to attempt such a process whilst listening to the interview tapes would be dangerous. It would not only increase the risk of taking part of the interview out of the overall context of the interview itself, but additionally, it might result in the identification of inappropriate data categories. While it might have been possible to counter such a danger by listening to each tape a number of times, and thereby checking, and refining the choice of categories employed, such a step was avoided for two reasons.

Firstly, it was felt that it would have taken a great deal of time, and considerable concentration, to listen to thirty-five tapes several times in order to try and check the validity of the categories used for interpreting the data. Secondly, there would be the not inconsiderable problem of remembering and comparing the data from one tape to another, without implicitly adopting some form of categorisation in an attempt to impose an order upon the sheer volume of data. There would be the risk of unintentionally simply confirming one's initial categorisation, without any additional improvement to the process of analysis.

An additional factor which served to increase such reservations was the variable quality of the interview tapes themselves. While the tape-recorder had been tested at the outset of each interview in order to check that the equipment was functioning correctly, it subsequently transpired that the quality of some of the recordings varied as the interview progressed. Sometimes this was due to background noise - road traffic, or on a couple of occasions nearby building and maintenance work - on other occasions however, even when there were no apparent external factors to account for it, the quality of the recording was sometimes less than desired.[4] By the time the problem was identified however, there were only two or three interviews remaining, and thirty-odd tapes for transcribing.

Another factor which became increasingly pertinent at this stage was the interviews themselves. While the seven general questions used for the interviews did provide some structure to the interview, they were intended to stimulate reflexive, open-ended discussion on the part of the respondent, rather than provide a prescriptive format. To the extent that such an approach was successful, this added to the problems and dangers encountered in seeking to analyze the tapes themselves. It would not necessarily be sufficient to compare and contrast responses to specific questions.

For the above-mentioned reasons therefore, it was felt safer to attempt to transcribe the tapes in their entirety, rather than attempt an ongoing "interpretive-editing" of them. While every attempt was made to transcribe the tapes verbatim, this proved to be impossible for small sections of five or six of the tapes where the quality of the recordings proved to be simply too

poor to allow accurate transcription. Even allowing for this however, the interviews provided some two hundred and eighty-six pages of transcription.

**Making Sense of the Data**

Given the inexperience of the researcher, no attempt was made to record or measure the nuances encountered in individual's speech-patterns. Likewise, conversational tone, emphasis, humour, or irony was ignored on the grounds that the research was not primarily concerned with this level of analysis. Rather, the concern here was with identifying individuals' perceptions and beliefs with regard to certain aspects of the cultural milieux of the School. In order to achieve this the transcripts were read, and re-read several times in order to identify which themes and issues were mentioned by the respondents during the course of the interview. Initially this was undertaken by the use of a marker-pen to highlight a passage in the text where the respondent made specific reference to some facet of School-life. Subsequently, by re-reading the texts an initial attempt was made to label such comments with reference to their subject-matter.

From such analysis, some twenty-eight "factual" subject-topics were identified, i.e. they were specifically mentioned by respondents. Thus the "size" and "structure" of the School were specifically mentioned by some respondents as factors which influenced behaviour within the School, and helped to account for perceived changes and anomalies or ambiguity in behaviour. By collapsing or combining some of categories together, it was found possible to reduce this initial list to eighteen such categories. Thus for example, references to "Positive Discrimination" and "Equal Opportunities Policies" were combined together on the grounds that both subjects were concerned with issues of gender-relationships within the School. Likewise it was found possible to combine references to changes in the mechanisms of "Control" within the School, and references to "Communication" processes as the form and content of communication may be perceived as being a mechanism of control.

A distinction between "Control" and "Managerialism", while containing overlapping references in the transcripts, was retained on the grounds that references to the latter appeared to indicate an awareness of a broader change in approach to the style and manner of management within the School, while the former tended to be somewhat more specific. Likewise the distinction made by some respondents between "Internal Competition" and "Individualism", while perhaps being overlapping categories in some instances, was retained on the grounds that for some respondents there was a clear distinction made between the two. "Internal Competition" referred to perceived instances where individuals, or groups, were deliberately non-cooperative with their colleagues, while in the case of "Individualism" the emphasis appeared to be placed on this being either a response to perceived changes in the external and internal environments of the School, and also a "coping mechanism" by which individuals sought to

deal with both a perceived intensification in the work, and/or a reaction to perceived changes to, and inequities in the reward-system within the School.

An additional category of "Informal Cliques" was also retained on the grounds that, while it did provide some overlap with references to "Internal Competition", this was not so in every instance. For some respondents "Informal Cliques" had both positive and negative connotations. For some, it reflected aspects of the history of the place and the fact that one might choose, by personal preference, to work with a "residue of mates" who one felt secure with, and who were felt to be trustworthy and reliable when it came to delivering course-content. For others, it expressed a somewhat more negative aspect, referring to inequalities of power and opportunity existing within the School.

In addition to these eighteen "factually-based" analytical categories three other categories were employed which were not exclusively derived from the factual analysis of the interview transcripts, these being: "Equity"; "Ambiguity"; and "Personal Values/School Values". References to "Ambiguity" might, and did, in part arise from references in the transcripts arising from responses to Questions six and seven, but not exclusively. Examples of ambiguity and contradiction also arose with regard to references to, for example: managerialism and professional autonomy; creativity/innovation and control; equal opportunity policies and practice; organisational structure and the pursuit of quality; and education versus pragmatism. The fact that instances of ambiguity/contradiction were able to be identified at various points in the transcripts may perhaps provide some support for the "iterative nature" of the questions, and in addition, provide some instances where some of the "deeper", "taken-for-granted" aspects of the cultural ethos of the School were given expression by respondents.

References to "Equity", likewise, were found to be given expression not just in response to Question seven, but elsewhere in the text. As such they provided examples of non-elicited references to instances of perceived inequity, which were not always repeated in reply to Question seven.

The category entitled "Personal Values/School Values" was chosen as indicating instances where respondents expressed a clearly-stated opinion concerning whether they perceived there to be some degree of compatibility, or otherwise, between their perception of their own personal value-system and what they perceived to be the predominant values within the School. Such comments, while often arising in response to Questions four or five, could also be located elsewhere in the interview transcripts, and were taken to express something of both the continuity and harmony existing within the School, and also something of the perceived stresses and strains arising from changes within the work environment.

Thus, in total, twenty-one topic-categories were chosen to provide the other arm of the matrix used to facilitate analysis of the data contained within the interview transcripts. What remained was to conduct the analysis, seeking to find out whether the initial sub-division of the respondent population retained any meaningful validity when put to the test. The twenty-one categories used to classify the content of the interviews were as follows:-

| | |
|---|---|
| Ambiguity | Equity |
| Size | Structure |
| Control | Managerialism |
| Market | History |
| Work Hard | Internal Competition |
| Change | Leadership |
| Centre/School | Individualism |
| Informal Cliques | Personal Values/School Values |
| Individual Reward Scheme | Totley/Dyson |
| Teaching/Administration | Strategy/Planning |

Positive Discrimination/Equal Opportunities

**Issues, Dilemmas, and Resolutions**

While all twenty-one categories were utilised during the analysis of the interview transcripts, it became apparent that some were utilised much more frequently than others. While this was partly due to the actual composition of the interviewees, e.g. women, while making up ten of the thirty-five respondents, were found to be more likely to make references to "Equal Opportunities and Positive Discrimination", it became apparent that, as the analysis progressed, certain themes began to predominate. These might be schematically presented in terms of:-

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Flexibility/Innovation | vs | Size & Complexity |
| Autonomy | vs | Managerialism |
| Personal values/beliefs | vs | Espoused/School Values |
| Individualism | vs | Team/Collegiality |

While this is a necessarily crude expression of the complexity of individuals' views as expressed during the interviews, it does indicate something of the inherent tensions and ambiguities experienced by individuals located within a context of ongoing change. The fact that the headings are presented as being in opposition, or competition with each other should not be taken as representing a polarisation of positions, the reality of the situation is both more fluid and complex than that suggested by the above listing as the analysis of the interview data presented in the following chapter will indicate. Before undertaking such a task however, one can usefully conclude this chapter by considering one of the more important aspects of the present situation which indicates the complexity and ostensible contradictions arising from the present structure and composition of the School.

**Size, Structure, Flexibility and Complexity**

Both the size and current structure of the School need to be seen as factors which both express the concern to facilitate adaptability on the part of the School, but which also give rise to certain tensions.

Officially, the School is presented as having a "matrix structure". One "arm" being represented by the six Subject Groups within which all teaching and research staff are located. As indicated earlier these comprise: Corporate Strategy; Decision Making; Marketing; Human Resource Management and Organisational Behaviour; Public Sector Management; and International Business. In human, and managerial terms, these are represented, or symbolised by the six Subject Leaders, who have responsibility for generally managing the human resource represented by the staff who are members of the particular Subject Group. The other "arm"is provided by the various courses which are offered by the School. This arm being represented physically by the various Course Leaders, who have responsibility for the overall organisation, presentation, and quality of the particular course with which they are concerned. Which "arm" - or in human terms - the Subject Leaders or the Course Leaders - wields the most power and influence within the School is a matter of debate, as is the question of how well it works in practice. While on the one hand this reflects traditional textbook-criticisms of such structures, in human terms it reflects something of the uncertainty and complexity confronting individual members of staff.

> Under the matrix structure that we've got, nobody seems to be responsible - often people seem to ignore other people and work on their own.
>
> Put it another way, with departments, there was a clear home, there is no clear home for people these days, it's (the Subject Group) too big to administer as a clear home. - It can lead to a

> lot of people working on their own rather than as part of a coherent whole.

There is, however, more than simply the matrix structure to consider when looking at the overall structure of the School and how it has developed since its establishment,

> they've got a hierarchy on top of the matrix which makes it all a bit redundant, and undermines the idea why it was introduced.

> - now what we've got - we've got "organisation charts"; we've got "Head of New Ventures"; "Associate Heads" - and these people are actually using these titles! We're getting to be a much taller-type of organisation than the flatter/flexible type which is appropriate for a dynamic environment - or so we're told. I think this hierarchical; title-ridden organisation is not really appropriate.

Such comments reflect concerns regarding how well the current structure of the School is able to cope with both the expressed desire for flexibility, and also the desire by some individuals for some form of collective identity within the School. In addition, there is also the concern that individual autonomy is being eroded through the increasing attempts to direct and organise individuals' work activities in ways which are felt to conflict, or "jar" with individual notions of "professional autonomy". In this respect, the concerns expressed regarding the structure of the School, cannot be entirely divorced from the perceptions of an increase in "managerialism" and "control" within the School.

While the matrix structure, and perhaps particularly the Subject Groups are intended to express a concern for devolved management, and the recognition that individuals wish to retain some control over their "mix" of activities, there is some concern expressed that Subject Leaders, perhaps encouraged by the senior management group within the School, are beginning to take on a more directive, expressly "managerial" role, which may bring them into conflict with their group-members.

Related to this, is the matter of "Size" - the fact that the Business School is the largest of the Schools of which the university is comprised.

> We're very big! I think that's a problem as a Business School. I expect we'd be much more comfortable if we were smaller. Its just huge - three thousand plus students; 160-170 staff. We're talking about managing a small university.

Thus, size, particularly since the School's expansion in 1989, has become a factor - which helps to explain both the choice of a matrix structure, and the

need for the more overt hierarchy which has emerged to oversee, and give focus and direction to the School. But, as one of the earliest members of the School observed, such developments are not without their problems,

> Since the Business School was formed in 1986 I think it has changed fairly dramatically. In its early days, it was strongly entrepreneurial. There was a significant effort in terms of generating income - fairly entrepreneurial - fairly lax in its systems.

The change which this interviewee highlights is that the focus of the School has changed, from the "external" - the market - to the "internal", and an increased concern with control over resources,

> But our School, because it's pulled everything together, is now a big conglomerate, and it's now almost impossible to identify the use of resources. And you can see it all - we're absolutely awash with systems in terms of reporting. Absolutely, totally awash! Now that's a classic case - the systems can be circumvented, so all we seem to spend our life doing these days is finding code numbers to apply money to.

Such a comment draws attention not only to how the School's management system has changed, and the increased concern with the design and use of control mechanisms, but also to the tensions which are thereby created with regard to the desire for flexibility and responsiveness to changing market opportunities.[5] It also, perhaps inadvertently, draws attention to the informal practices which form part of every organisation's processes, but which with regard to the School, take on an added dimension in that they express the tensions existing between the concerns regarding increased "managerialism" and the desire to retain "professional collegiality".
Some indication of how respondents perceived the present nature of the School are afforded by some of the responses to Question One, which asked respondents how they would describe the working environment/work climate of the School to a newcomer or stranger. The contrasting views which were expressed indicate both the transitional nature of the period in which the interviews were conducted, and the diversity of ways in which this was perceived by respondents.

> Well, its laid-back; its undisciplined; its unstructured; its informal. To a large extent its kind of laissez-faire. Its that "loose", "friendly" sort of environment and work climate.

> - there is a very high degree of camaraderie. Its just a very pleasant culture in which to work.

Its very aggressive and competitive. Morale is very poor, and because of this the climate is quite depressing and is often very negative.

Basically, what I would say is that the work area is tremendously varied and exciting. But there is a complete lack - a complete lack of collegiality!

The fact that one was undertaking the interviews during a period of ongoing changes to not only the range of activities, and the internal management systems of the School, but also to the espoused values of the School, and how they were prioritized, or ranked internally, obviously complicates the process of analysis.

Any such undertaking necessarily reflects both the subjectivity and bias of the researcher and his power as author of the text, thereby ensuring that any such account will be both partial and open to question regarding its accuracy. Even although the initial draft of the analysis of the interviews was returned to the respondents for comment, as a means of eliciting feedback, the final version inevitably reflects the views of the writer as author and editor of the text.

## Notes

1. In retrospect, it could be said that the first three interviews were the equivalent to piloting and testing the research design. In reality, it reflects the inexperience of the researcher - but a willingness to learn.

2. During some interviews it was noticed that the respondent made use of written notes in making their response, thereby confirming that at least some interviewees had taken the opportunity to think about their replies prior to the interview.

3. This is important as even a particular form of expression or phrase, might identify someone to a reader who has known the other party for some years.

4. It is said that a good craftsman never blames his tools, but a thoughtful craftsman will replace a tool which proves to be defective. On reflection I wish I had.

5. It must be borne in mind however, that the concern for increased control, and the more efficient use, of School resources, is not simply the wish of internal management, but also reflects powerful pressures from both the central management of the University, and from government agencies.

# Chapter Five
# Analyzing Sheffield Business School

## Introduction

The intention of this chapter is firstly, to provide a summary and analysis of the interviews conducted with the academic members of staff within Sheffield Business School. While the original intention was to locate respondents' ethical concerns within an analysis of the School's cultural milieux no particular cultural typology was used to structure the analysis. Although McNay (1995) provides a typology of the changing cultural types to be found within academic institutions, it was decided that Meyerson's & Martin's (1987) typology where they distinguish between the analytical paradigms of Integration, Differentiation, and Ambiguity provided a more apt basis for analysis.[1] Having said this, however, that typology is not directly used as a basis for what follows, only to indicate the complexity of the analytical process and to indicate the uncertainties involved in attempting to impose an order and comprehension upon what is an ongoing process of change. Secondly, there is the intention of providing two alternative means of analyzing the Business School as a means of indicating the need to contextualise the case study within contemporary, and contrasting modes of thought as a means of indicating the utility of the case study as an aid to theoretical analysis which is presented in the following chapter.

## Analyzing the Case Study

For the purposes of presentation and clarity the analysis is sub-divided into discrete sections. It will become apparent however, that such divisions are an artificial device of the writer, and that the subjects discussed are often interlinked with one another. The concern to provide a clearer picture for the reader reflects the artificial order imposed on the data by the writer.

## History and Collegiality

A brief indication of the history of Sheffield Business School was provided in the preceding chapter. However, it is necessary to take account of both the history and geographical location of the School in order to make sense of the present situation.

The six-mile distance between the Totley Campus and Dyson House not only separates the postgraduate and undergraduate teaching from one another, it also symbolizes the partial continuation of departmental identification and perspectives which has not been entirely eradicated by the creation of the six Subject Groups within the School. That memories of old departmental rivalries still persist is perhaps only to be expected. What is perhaps changing is the intensity of feelings and the objects of concern. As one respondent expressed it,

> At least people do talk to each other now - between the three old departments. Its a bit easier going down to Dyson now.

That tensions do still exist however, is indicated by another respondent who remarked that,

> Originally it was Management Studies versus Business Studies. Now its just Business School - Totley versus Dyson.

To some extent such divisions reflect the previous differences in disciplinary focus and identification by staff. Many of the longer-serving staff in Dyson House derive part of their self-identity from their association with distinct academic disciplines, such as economics or politics, as opposed to those holding a more pragmatic or "managerialist approach".
It is apparent however that present tensions between staff located at Totley and Dyson House are not simply an expression of "cultural lag". There are feelings of inequity and unfairness concerning the division of activities between the two sites. As one Totley-based respondent expressed it,

> It's certainly understood by staff that the "glamour end" of the Business School is this end - not Dyson.

In part, the tension between staff located on the two sites is defused by the use of humour, although the humour can also express the underlying feelings of resentment. For staff located in Dyson House, Totley is sometimes referred to as "Sleepy Hollow". This is not simply a reference to the topographical nature of the Totley Site, it expresses something of the feelings of Dyson staff regarding their feelings of self-worth and their evaluation of the staff at Totley. To quote two Dyson respondents,

> There is a feeling among staff that the "foot soldiers" are at Dyson.

and,

> The feeling down here is that up at Totley they don't appreciate what's going on here, and they regard us as a bunch of layabouts. Or something like that.

Such comments, and references to Totley as "Sleepy Hollow", reflect feelings of both inferiority and self-pride among Dyson House staff. That it is they, through their hard work and concern to maintain academic standards in the face of reduced resources and "second division" status, who are upholding the academic and educational values of the School.

In apparent contrast to this, postgraduate teaching has tended to be viewed as being more attractive than undergraduate teaching due to the greater

challenge and intrinsic interest attached to it. Such perceptions have perhaps been strengthened in recent years by the perceived loss of individual autonomy in the provision of undergraduate educational provision occasioned by the concern of the University administration to re-organize such teaching as a means of ensuring for efficient use of resources.
If such observations appear to reflect a Differentiation Paradigm of the School's cultural milieux, in the sense that there are different subcultures existing among School members, such internal divisions are also evident in both the concern for, and forms of collegiality within the School.

Collegiality among academics is perhaps most commonly associated with the ideals of academic professionalism, individual autonomy, and shared values. Among respondents, the concern with collegiality took a number of contrasting forms and expressions. With regard to perceiving academic staff as a collective body, the commonly expressed concern was with the loss of professional autonomy as a result of an increased "managerialism" and "bureaucratization" of their working environment. The "common enemy" identified here was the Administration, which referred to both School administrators and also the central administrative bodies of the University. Within the internal context of the Business School itself however, collegiality was perceived to take other forms.

In terms of the internal processes and politics of the School, collegiality refers to the existence of cliques, factions, and informal groupings which serve as both a basis of self-identity and association for individuals, and which also provides an important means by which individuals seek to exert some degree of control over their working environment. As one of the Newcomers remarked,

> My first impression was that it was very friendly. That changed! I still think its friendly, but, there are a lot of politics in the place which become apparent very soon after starting.

The need, as Gregory (1983) and Lucas (1987) observe, to complement any cultural analysis of an organisation with an appreciation of the political processes at work is borne out by the observation of one of the Old Guard who observed that,

> So it seems to me, in terms of working atmosphere - you've got a residue of "mates". People who operate together in a collegial sense, with this rather lately-introduced, more managerialist set of values which are attempting to change that in a way.

Another respondent, in observing how such political networks are interwoven into the more formal managerial processes within the School, remarked that its,

> like a series of concentric rings, as you move towards the centre. Its almost a spider's-web thing is'nt it.

Or as another respondent expressed it,

> I think, for example, that patronage operates. There's a system of patronage. It can be both negative and positive. People can be given shitty jobs because they know you'll probably do them reasonably competently.

Such observations serve to indicate both the residue of departmental affiliations which persist within the School, and the ways in which this can reinforce present-day feelings of inequity and unfairness in the allocation of responsibilities and opportunities among staff.

As indicated in the previous chapter, the very size of the Business School mitigates against the creation of a homogeneous, or Integration Paradigm, of culture, particularly when viewed in combination with it's past history of departmental competition and the present split-site location. Many members of staff have frequent interaction with others predominantly on the basis of teaching on the same course or module. Although the six Subject Groups provide both a source of affiliation and identification, their function is essentially an administrative one for purposes of the allocation of teaching and Group meetings tend to be infrequent. While there are attempts to foster a collective School identity through such activities as the Christmas party, and the School's Strategy Day in the summer, they are at best only partially successful. Such symbolic rituals, as Trice & Beyer (1984, 1985) suggest, can be used to foster collective identity, and to emphasize the importance of common goals and objectives, but their effect must be viewed against the persistence of strong internal affiliations among the staff which influence how they interpret and evaluate such activities.

One respondent succinctly expressed the effects of both size and internal divisions within the School when suggesting that,

> -its like rings on a tree I suppose. They're (the people he works closely with) the innermost rings. And then there's another ring, or group of people I get on O.K. with, and then there's a whole lot of people I hardly have anything to do with, and I hardly interact with.

One further indication of the persistence of differences of opinion and belief among members of the School is illustrated by considering perceptions of leadership within the School. Although there was no specific attempt to discover what respondents felt about the current Head of School it was noticed that ex-members of the Department of Management Studies were much more likely to comment on this than other members of staff. For example,

> I'm not engaged in hero worship, but I guess Kevan has been a very strong guiding force. I see a lot of the changes as being incredibly healthy changes.

and,

> Give Kevan his due. I think he operates within the institutional regime with much more enlightenment than lots of other managers. As soon as you go to other Schools, you see a much more oppressive, directly controlling form of management control.

Given that the Head of the Business School was a member of that department before being appointed Head of the Department of Business Studies it is not perhaps surprising to find such a degree of affinity being expressed. One might almost say that Kevan, in becoming Head of School, has "come home", bringing two additional departments with him.[2] Such affinity and identification with the School on the part of ex-members of the Department of Management Studies is also expressed in terms of a concurrence between their own, personal values and those which they perceive to be articulated in the various activities and policies of the School.

> I think I'm very lucky! Lots of the values and opportunities that the School has created fit me very well.

However, such expressions of personal satisfaction must be tempered by the acknowledgement that for others there is a sense of loss of professional autonomy and individual freedom, and that individuals' activities are becoming more prone to external direction and evaluation.

> I think the issue of personal academic freedom has been interfered with. If you want to do research, you have to bargain with people - somebody to see if your research is O.K.. I think we have left behind some fairly cherished values, which are a serious loss. Its not - "Oh God - they're gone!" We've given up something. I'm quite sure.

Such an observation indicates the need to consider the ways in which the working environment within the School is perceived to have changed and, according to some, become increasingly prone to being both managed and measured, a process which has also resulted in a change in attitudes towards the work itself.

**Intensification of Work, and Instrumentalism**

Two aspects of the work environment on which there was general agreement were, firstly that the amount and pace of work had increased, and secondly, that individual and group autonomy had declined due to an

increase in both the forms and amount of external control over individual behaviour and activity within the workplace.
Respondents, some of who had over twenty years experience of working within an educational environment, commented on the changing nature of the work.

> It is'nt a sort of "Academic Valhalla". Its a very busy place, and it requires people to work in all sorts of strange ways, like weekends and evenings.

and,

> I certainly find that I'm working longer hours than I've ever worked before. I think I'm working harder. I think I'm subjected to higher levels of stress than I've ever been subjected to before in my life. And I think I have less time to develop and pursue those things I want to.

and,

> I work longer now than I ever did. The way you can tell - its the weekend. I now take two bags home rather than one.

It was apparent that respondents, particularly those with longer service, believed that the "tempo" or pace of work within the School had changed. There was also however, the recognition that some of the changes experienced by staff were not entirely generated internally, and that some of the more important "triggers for change" were the result of factors external to the School. Changes in institutional policy and practice by the University, the effects of government policy and funding policies, and the increasingly competitive nature of the higher educational sector, were all seen as producing pressure for change on the part of the Business School.

For some respondents, such changes provoked a somewhat mixed response in terms of the evaluation of their effects upon the School. While some of the changes were subject to criticism, it was also recognised that there were some beneficial effects as well. As one of the respondents who occupied a fairly senior position within the management structure of the School remarked,

> The environment has become a lot more threatening. And its certainly much more financially tough and restricting. I think what competition is doing, perversely, is exposing the market to us. Its actually making our potential customers more aware of what places like this can do.

If such observations reflect the belief that competition within the tertiary educational sector could provide advantages to those organisations

perceived to be providing a good service to their clients, there was also the realization that it had its costs as well. The increased pressure to be responsive to the School's customers, and to maintain and enhance the range and quality of services provided had resulted in changes to both the composition of the School and its internal activities and procedures. For some, this had served to highlight the tensions between the pressures to respond to the requirements of the educational marketplace and certain of the values and work practices which individuals had become accustomed to. This in turn, gave rise to feelings that the process of change within the School had moved beyond the control of individual members of staff, and that some of the changes were not necessarily beneficial to either the School or to its members as individuals.

Along with the perception that the volume of peoples' work activity had increased, and that the pace of work had intensified, there was also a considerable amount of concern expressed regarding a perceived loss of autonomy. As one respondent expressed it,

> The thing that has happened in the last three to four years. What's happened within the Business School is that we've reasonably willingly embraced a "harder" style of operation.

The most obvious contradictions which emerged from the interviews was the concern to preserve "professional autonomy" and the observations concerning the perceived increase in "managerialism". There was the feeling by some that the culture of the School had changed to reflect a more "managerialist culture",

> There is a lot more control. Quite overt control. There is a managerial culture. We have adopted a managerial approach. With a lot more pinning of responsibility, and therefore creating situations where people are deemed to have failed.

and,

> Its a much more commercial organisation than many people might imagine. But its certainly changed in terms of the pace of work; the flexibility demanded of staff; and it is a more tightly controlled environment than it was. Tighter questions are being asked about peoples' workloads.

The perceived clash of interests between the concern to protect professional autonomy and the perceptions of an increase in the exercise of external control, whether it be perceived in terms of "managerialism" and/or the increasing power of the University's central administration to regulate the provision of educational resources both between and within the various Schools, was a common concern expressed by respondents. The perceived

loss of autonomy and freedom to determine one's own activities was expressed in two concerns.

Firstly, there was concern about the increased attention paid to "customer care" and that staff were now being evaluated by students in terms of how their input to courses and modules were perceived by the recipients. For some, this was perceived as both a threat to their personal autonomy and professional competence.

> There is one thing that upsets and worries me - about the notion of being "responsive to the consumer" and so on. No one really wants students to be unhappy; and that they're being victimized, or in any way put down by an autocratic lecturer. I think there has to be mechanisms to ensure that justice is done to the individual. But at the end of the day, I think equally - we have a right to comment on students!

and,

> You're trying to develop students to be well-informed, and analytical. It's extremely painful! It means that you have to fail people! It means that you have to upset them. But we've customers that pay £1500 - and I've had one student who I've failed who now refuses to be taught by me!
> Our professionalism is being questioned. It's like me going to a doctor and saying - "Don't like that doctor! You do it this way!"

For others, "customer power" was perceived in similar terms to that indicated by Du Gay and Salaman (1992), as an additional means by which management could legitimate an increase in the workload, using the mechanism of student evaluation to increase pressure on staff to increase their efforts on behalf of the School.

> Managerialism is enhanced by the fact that students see themselves as "paying customers" and expect blood! Many do!

Secondly, there was a perception that what one did, and what one achieved, or did not achieve, was being subjected to both increased scrutiny and evaluation.

> The messages coming out of the woodwork are about "outputs", and about your "outputs" across a range of activities.

For some, the increased concern that was manifested in "measurable outputs" also reflected a change in the priorities and objectives by the management of the School which was not uniformly shared by all staff. The desire to be a good teacher and course administrator was no longer sufficient to provide sufficient criteria for either a successful career, or provide a source of personal satisfaction. As one respondent observed,

> I think the people in the Business School fall in to two categories. Those whose primary duty, which occupies most of their working life, is teaching. And those for whom teaching is only about half of what they do - or possibly even less.

Speaking of the former category, he continued,

> Unless they are incredibly optimistic in their natures, I think they must feel very, very stressed, and the older ones must feel very, very threatened by the rapid changes. And what some of them have expressed very clearly to me, as a devaluation of the importance of the teaching, and scholarship, and academic enterprise, and so on.

In a similar vein, another respondent remarked that,

> One thing I'm absolutely sure about is that areas which in the past have not seemed necessarily over-attractive are becoming attractive in terms of work, to escape from the drudgery of teaching and marking.

The same respondent also observed that,

> I think people are opting out (of teaching) to do other things - like research. I mean, if you can get a Research Fellowship which knocks half your teaching timetable out. Then I suspect that people breathe a sigh of relief and say - Thank God for that! I've escaped some of that drudgery.[3]

Another respondent perhaps summarises a widely felt feeling among staff in commenting that with regard to the official attitude towards teaching within the School, "It's taken for granted".

Such a comment cannot be taken literally at face-value, as it is clearly contradicted by the very nature of much of the concern expressed within the School to monitor and evaluate teaching provision. However, when placed in the context of the changes which have taken place within the School in recent years: the intensification of work; the increased diversity of activities within the School; and the expressed concerns regarding inequities of both opportunity and reward, then such feelings take on an added significance.

To some extent, such concerns express a relative unwillingness to unquestioningly accept that all change within the Business School in recent years have been beneficial and desirable. In addition, however, such comments reflect something of the uncertainty and confusion among some staff regarding what the main objectives and activities of the School should be, and the criteria by which such varied activities should be compared and evaluated.

One of the more senior members of staff among the respondents, while acknowledging both the pace of change and the uncertainty which this gave rise to observed that,

> I think that by 1994 we've reached a situation where people are saying - Tell me what the rules are. Tell me what I have to do.

Such an observation is insightful in that it appears to reflect the assumption that there is a desire for both greater cohesion and clarity within the School regarding agreed objectives, methods of evaluation, and criteria for the allocation of rewards. What it fails to acknowledge is that there is genuine disagreement among staff regarding what the nature of the School should be regarding both its range of activities and its management.

What is apparent from the information provided by the respondents is that both the pace of organisational change within the School, and the intensification of work, has prompted a change in the way in which some individuals approach their work activity. To some extent this reflects the belief that the professional autonomy of staff has been challenged by the increasing use of bureaucratic and administrative forms of control. One response to such a perceived loss of professional autonomy, and the assumption of professional trust and responsibility associated with it, has been the development of a more instrumental and calculative approach to work by many staff - something which was remarked upon by a number of respondents. As one senior staff member remarked,

> I go to people with what I think are wonderful opportunities, and they are basically saying - what's in it for me?

This calculative approach is also reflected in a changed attitude to the working of overtime. The same respondent also observed,

> Its almost as if, as soon as you introduce the possibility of overtime, it becomes a currency!

Another respondent, one with many years service, indicates something of the way in which attitudes towards work have changed in recent years when observing that,

> Years ago, I would have done things because it was right and good that I should - but I won't now. Absolutely not! If they want me to do anything, I'll say, "Right, what's it worth? What sort of overtime is it worth paying me?" And it's awful! I hate it! But, almost - you're pushed in to it. I know that's not true, because everyone has free will, fundamentally. But when it comes down to it - if you're expected to do something and you either claim the overtime or not - you claim the overtime.

There is a temptation to draw a parallel between the expression of instrumentalism within the School, and Goldthorpe's et al (1968) study of the "Affluent Worker", and Lockwood's (1960) reference to the "brittleness" of the "cash nexus" which may exist between management and employee, but to do so would be to overstate the present situation. Rather it is more appropriate to reflect that the previously quoted respondent is both aware of, and expresses a dislike for his own behaviour. This reflects something of the present confusion among staff regarding their feelings and attitudes towards work. It expresses something of both the loss of autonomy and the loss of self-esteem, and job satisfaction felt by many staff at the present time, and the realization that attitudes and behaviour are changing - albeit sometimes with some reluctance.

There is also the realization among staff that such changes in attitude and behaviour are not solely the result of changes in the internal control mechanisms within the School. The change in 1992 to staffs' terms and conditions of employment were widely perceived as resulting in a deterioration of individuals' terms of employment, and this, combined with a perceived loss of earnings relative to other comparable groups of employees due to government constraints on public sector pay, has also influenced attitudes. As another respondent observed,

> Another thing I noticed is that since the new contract things that people used to do out of goodwill, or quid pro quo - you ask them something and their immediate response is, "How many hours?" Or you offer to do something and they say, "How many hours?" They must have calculator minds!

The loss of "goodwill", and the willingness to undertake new, and additional responsibilities, is perhaps one of the saddest expressions of the change in attitudes among staff. In part, it reflects the perceived necessity to both conserve one's energy, and also, in a sense, to "look after oneself" reflecting the reluctant realization that such concern is increasingly necessary. One respondent summed up the change in behaviour quite succinctly in noting,

> People don't volunteer things any more. Ask for a volunteer and every bugger dives for cover!

While such a comment is an over-statement, it does reflect how attitudes towards both work and colleagues have changed in recent years. Quite how one might make sense of such changes to the working environment is not a straightforward process. In part this reflects the fact that such changes are still ongoing and therefore it is difficult to develop a clear understanding of the situation at any given point in time. In addition, it also reflects the fact that how one perceives, and makes sense of the current situation will not be a reflection of any collective consensus, but rather it will reflect the variety of subjective interpretations and evaluations on the part of respondents. The subtlety of such variations in interpretation is perhaps illustrated with regard to the question of the exercise of managerial control within the School, and whether it is perceived to be more or less prescriptive with regard to individual behaviour. Whether it is more accurately described as "management by prescription" or "management by encouragement" is difficult to determine. Two contrasting quotations from different respondents reflect the various shades of opinion regarding this that were expressed during the interviews. While one respondent suggested that,

> It is perhaps the culture of the organisation - staff not being put under pressure to achieve under certain headings. Rather there's a "pushing" of people in that particular direction. And if they choose not to go in that particular direction there is scope for them to refuse to go.

Another indicated that the choice not to go along with the "pushing", may not be without cost.

> Sometime, within my immediate working environment, you tend to be put in charge of something - a project or something - and that's a bit tricky, because it's always offered to you as an "opportunity". In that respect it would be a consultative approach (to management) - but again, in reality, you can't afford to say "no" too often.

Such observations indicate how the processes of change within the School are both complex, in terms of how they are perceived and responded to by staff, but also how they are aware that such pressures for change are both gradual but persistent. If, as one of the respondents who was previously a member of the Department of Management Studies remarked that the School is a "more purposeful organisation" than his old department, it is the processes by which managerial control is both exercised and perceived which require scrutiny.

**Management in an Uncertain Climate**

Enough has already been written to indicate that the processes by which control and the coordination of activities are undertaken within the School

exhibit a degree of both sophistication and complexity. Three separate, but interrelated dimensions of this can be identified:

Management by Collegiality

Management by Managerialism

Management by Administration

Management by Collegiality

Reference has already been made to the importance of collegiality within the School and the way in which it reflects the continuation of past associations, cliques and informal groupings dating from pre-School, Departmental affiliations. In some respects the continuation and development of such informal relationships provides a mechanism of semi-informal peer-group control over the allocation of teaching and administrative responsibilities among lecturers. This is recognized by Subject leaders who, although having formal responsibility for the allocation of teaching, acknowledge that most lecturers create their own workloads through informal networking with colleagues. The Subject leaders are concerned primarily with the allocation of that teaching which is not voluntarily undertaken by staff, and to intervene in situations where such informal allocative procedures generate instances of perceived inequity among members of the Subject Group.[4]

The notion of collegiality is also associated with the concept of professionalism and the exercise of professional autonomy. On the one hand, professional autonomy can be taken to denote individual responsibility for the design and provision of course content and the maintenance of a "quality service" to customers and clients. However, within the present context, it is also used as a means of legitimating the intensification of work within the School. The general message conveyed by those with managerial responsibilities within the School is that staff should both accept and respond to such demands as part of their professional duties. Paradoxically, professionalism can also be used as a means of recrimination when individuals encounter problems in dealing with such a situation. As one respondent observed with regard to the increasing workload,

> But, the interesting thing is that senior management, in response to what I've said would instantly turn round and say, "Well, that's your problem, because you're not managing your time correctly. Because you've taken on too much work. Because you have'nt taken enough care to look after your own development." In other words, they're suggesting that you are "enlightenly selfish".

Such an observation illustrates how notions of professional autonomy are related to earlier comments concerning the perceived increase in instrumentalism, calculativeness, and individualistic self-interest among staff,[5] and how this finds expression through the informal peer alliances and affiliations among staff.[6] It is not perhaps surprising that this has resulted in feelings of inequity among staff concerning the allocation of teaching, administrative responsibilities, and developmental opportunities within the School.

> There are fiefdoms, or feudal-sort of structures around here.
> Which convey forms of rights and privileges on people.

In effect, the managerial processes within the School exhibit a confusing mixture of informal self-control through peer-group affiliations, and formal procedures allocating teaching and administrative responsibilities. As one respondent remarked,

> It's part of the problem of dropping in this chasm between collegiality and managerialism. It's not managerial enough to be absolutely clear how work is allocated, and what you have to do in order to "get along" as it were. On the other hand, it's not quite collegial enough for people to look after their colleagues.

In practice, the distinction between managerialism and collegiality, presenting them as opposing concepts, is false. Within the School there is a subtle, and shifting interpretation and utilisation of both concepts as part of the means by which individuals and groups redefine their areas of influence and control, both between informal work groups and those individuals perceived to occupy positions embodying managerial responsibilities. It is a negotiated process by which the perceived reality of the School, and individual and group autonomy within it, is renegotiated and redefined on an ongoing basis whenever there is a change made to current practice and activities.

## Management by Managerialism

Managerialism as a concept can be taken to embody a variety of dimensions: an emphasis on hierarchy; bureaucratic forms of regulation; a concern for regulation and control; leadership rather than participation; mechanisms of accountability; an emphasis upon planning; and the relating of performance measurement to the allocation of rewards. While the concept symbolises one of the main aspects of the modern organisation (Clegg, 1990), writers such as Coulson-Thomas (1992) and Johnson & Gill (1993) draw attention to the variety of ways in which managerial control may be exercised.

Within the present context, statements concerning the perceived increase in managerialism must be understood within their cultural context. The perceived increase in overt forms of managerial control is relative to prior experience. Therefore, for an ex-member of Management Studies, the present approach is compared to the recollection that,

> In some ways, the seventies and eighties approach to running the Department of Management Studies was like a sort of vaguely controlled anarchy - the organisational pyramid was almost a "vague heap".

While, for others, the present situation manifested a relative lack of managerial control and direction,

> I still don't see many signs that we are moving towards this rather more directional approach. It strikes me that we're a long way from the managerialist type of model!

and,

> It's laid-back! It's undisciplined! It's unstructured! It's informal! To a large extent it's kind of laissez-faire! I don't think people are directed enough. We're not driven by a strategy. We're not really driven by a Business Plan.

The differences in perception among respondents in part reflected their prior experiences - the latter two quotes expressing the views of Newcomers who had previously worked in the private sector and public administration.
In effect, the managerial control exercised by members of the Business School is still largely non-directive, reflecting the idea of "management by encouragement". However, this should not deter one from recognizing that for many respondents an increase in the exercise of managerial control was experienced as fact. To some extent the very increase in the number and size of courses now offered by the School necessitated an increase in both the amount of course management, and in the number of staff involved in such activities. However, there was also a perception that in some respects the senior management of the School was gradually adopting a more interventionist, or prescriptive approach towards staff which was perceived by some to conflict with the idea of professional autonomy. Two examples of this more directive or interventionist approach by the School management are provided with regard to the approach to academic research, and the use of "self-managed" time.

Since becoming a University, research activity has been given a higher status and prominence within the School. An important impetus for this was provided by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) exercise in 1992 which sought to both measure and compare the standing of Universities in terms of their research output.[7] The main research activity

within the School is undertaken within the two Research Centres: the Change Management Research Centre, and the Policy Research Centre. In addition, research activity was encouraged by the creation of Research Associateships which allow the recipient to allocate half of their timetable to research.

Given the intensification of work in recent years, it is not surprising that there has been considerable interest expressed by many staff in obtaining an Associateship, and concern expressed with regard to the criteria by which they are allocated.

Such a change in focus towards the encouragement of research, and the publication of articles in academic journals, provides both an example of the intensification of work, and an example of a more directive approach by the senior management within the School regarding how staff should allocate their time. Related to this last point is the question of "self-managed" time.[8] Traditionally how staff made use of the hundred hours of self-managed time was perceived to be at the personal discretion of the individual. More recently however it was decided that such activity should be subject to managerial scrutiny and evaluation. Where it was felt that an individual was not making constructive use of these hours the individual could be allocated additional teaching or administrative duties. For some staff, such a change in managerial behaviour was felt to be indicative of a more interventionist approach by the management of the School and an undesirable intrusion upon the professional autonomy of staff.[9]

## Management by Administration

For many respondents the issue of administration epitomized their concern for a perceived decrease in professional autonomy and an increase in managerial control. Administration symbolized the decrease in internal, or self-control, and an increase in external mechanisms of control.
Within the School, this concern took a number of forms. In part, it expressed the ambivalent relations with the central administrative functions of the University, reflecting the tensions existing between the desire for a semi-autonomous School and the desire for discretion in the design and provision of courses, and the perceived constraints imposed by the University in terms of both funding and the standardisation of courses. Such ambivalence is reflected in the observation of one of the more senior respondents who had direct dealings with the University administrative personnel,

> I see the Principal uses us, the Business School, as a kind of battering ram. He's very encouraging - "Do it! Do it!" But we test it. The level of support services for example. We're very aggressive. We're seen as "difficult". We're seen as very difficult and testing. In general we have a fairly bad reputation with the Centre. There's a kind of grudging admiration for us at the top. They don't like us very much. But they value us.

For those staff not having direct dealings with the University's administrative personnel, concern with "administration" was symbolized by the increased need for record-keeping and other duties undertaken by lecturers which were perceived as an unwelcome intrusion into academic activities. In addition, there was the perception that the concern to regulate procedures within the School reflected a shift in the balance of power between academics and administrators,

> There is one major thing - the place is not run for the benefit of students or academics, but for the support staff.

and,

> Whereas in the past, the administration staff were supporting academic activities, I mean the people that actually give the value-added - that, in fact, has now changed, and we don't have a support staff as such. We are having to support the support staff!

In addition, several respondents commented on the increased number of administrative staff within both the School and the University in recent years, relative to the number of additions to the academic staff.[10]
In part, such expressions of concern and dissatisfaction by academic staff reflect the external pressures for organisational change and improvements in the efficient use of resources by central government in recent years, which have in turn given rise to the need for improvements in the internal administration of the University. As one respondent observed, the subsequent constraints imposed upon the Business School by the University administration has resulted in a change in both the style of management and priorities within the School,

> The focus moves from the outside to the inside. So instead of managing markets, you manage resources.

The changed circumstances in which the School is required to operate generate a tension between the concern to encourage more entrepreneurial, and income-generating activities among staff, and the increased concern for cost-efficiencies, and the need for the additional monitoring and control over the use of School resources. In personal terms this takes the form of more scrutiny and evaluation of staff activity, and a more directive approach towards how staff allocate their time.
It is not surprising therefore, given the pace and complexity of recent changes to the working environment within the School that staff expressed their dissatisfaction with the present working environment. In part, this took the form of a romantic harkening-back to the old days and the expressed concern for a loss of professional autonomy. There is also however, the contradictory concern for an improvement in the management of the School

as a means of reducing present uncertainties and perceptions of inequity in the treatment of staff.

## Organisational Change: Inequities and Uncertainties

### Change, Continuity, and Gender

Given that the process of change within the Business School is still ongoing, it is not surprising that many respondents expressed concern regarding both the direction, and effects of such changes for themselves and their colleagues. The variation in how the present context was perceived and evaluated to some extent reflected the differing time-frames utilised by respondents. Three such time-frames were discernable. Firstly there were those who had been among the "founding fathers" of the Business School involved in its formation in 1986, and who remembered the political processes influencing the formation and nature of the School. Secondly, there were those who had joined the School as a result of the restructuring of the polytechnic in 1989 and who brought with them cultural memories of departmental alliances and work practices. Finally there were those who had joined the Business School after 1989 and who were required to make sense of, and respond to the cultural milieux with which they were confronted.

Perhaps the most significant differences between this last group and the others was, firstly their composition by gender, and secondly their views regarding the process of organisational change. Twenty-five of the thirty-five respondents were male, and of the ten female respondents, eight had joined the School since 1989.[11] It was among this group that concern with sexual inequality within the School was most often expressed.[12]

> The gender situation. Dear oh dear! What can I say about gender? We are a member of Project 2000. We have courses for women. An Equal Opportunities Officer - and it's as if these things applied to everybody but ourselves!

While the School management has established the post of Equal Opportunities Coordinator the impression was that the issue of sexual equality and opportunity was "managed" rather than dealt with effectively. In this respect, it reflected a contrast between the espoused values of the School and the values-in-use. As one male respondent reflected,

> I don't think there's any overt racism among the senior staff of the Business School. It's the male/female issue! I think that there is not one female member of academic staff who is, for example, qualified as able to lead an Annual Development Review. Every Annual Development Reviewer is male! That means that every SAP (Senior Academic Post-holder), every PL (Principal Lecturer).

> The reason that this causes me worry are, quite clearly, we are there to be "shot at" if we have'nt got a woman professor, bearing in mind that we've got some very bright women researchers.[13]

With regard to the issue of organisational change, this group was more likely than members of the Old Guard to comment on the lack of, and reluctance of others to embrace, organisational change.

> It (the School) is unbelievably, incredibly resistant to change. It does not practice what it preaches!

Among those respondents with more years of service there was a greater awareness of the way in things had changed in recent years, although this was sometimes tempered with an acknowledgement that some aspects of organisational life had endured.

> I'm surprised really, in some ways, how little things appear to me to have changed over the years. But in other ways, how radically things seem to have changed, say, over the last three or four years.

<u>Rewards and Promotions</u>

One important expression of such apparent contradiction was with regard to the system of organisational rewards and incentives. This issue also prompted the majority of expressions concerning inequity and unfairness among respondents with regard to how such rewards were distributed among the staff.

As indicated earlier, staff were very aware of the extent to which the pace of work had intensified in recent years and that, in general, there were greater demands placed upon their time. Not surprisingly therefore, there were some expressions of discontent concerning the availability of rewards for such staff efforts, a concern for how such rewards might be allocated, and whether the current distribution was felt to be equitable. Such concerns reflect the interaction of both past practices within the institution with regard to the awarding of promotion, and the consequences of contemporary changes within the School. On the one hand, there is an apparent yearning for the "old days" when both the formal and informal criteria were clearly understood by the majority of staff. However, as one senior member of staff observed with regard to this,

> In the nature of things like promotion and rewards - we've moved to a point where our systems are just not appropriate for what we' re trying to do.

While the "career grade" within the University, reflecting the career structure inherited from the days of being a Polytechnic, is that of Senior Lecturer, the aspiration of many is to be promoted to Principal Lecturer. Given both the age-structure of academic staff, and the considerable years of service which many staff have, plus the limited number of Principal Lectureships available, it is clear that the majority of Senior Lecturers are not going to achieve promotion. Inevitably this has given rise to feelings of unfairness in that the expenditure of effort on behalf of the Business School is not necessarily acknowledged in terms of achieving promotion. As one Subject leader remarked,

> But, what I feel very unhappy about is that I can look at a number of people in the institution who are Senior Lecturers, whose contribution, I think, is substantial, is sustained, but who's likelihood of being given a Principle Lectureship, for structural reasons, is very small.

Promotion, by its very nature, tends to be competitive. Failure to obtain promotion is somewhat easier to accept if one can at least reconcile oneself with the thought that the better person won. For that to be possible, there needs to be some commonly accepted criteria regarding how the prize should be awarded. In the current situation, for many individuals, this is not the case, and this in turn gives rise to claims of favouritism, and to the influence of factions or cliques being instrumental in influencing the outcome.

An additional source of grievance is that under existing arrangements, once one has been promoted one remains at that grade, moving by annual increments up the Principal Lecturer pay-scale. This has given rise to feelings of inconsistency and unfairness in that those appointed to Principal Lectureships under the old, Departmental criteria, retain that grade when the criteria by which they gained such promotion has ceased to be viewed as sufficient for contemporary candidates. Such a situation is aggravated, for some, by concerns regarding the contemporary contribution of some Principal Lecturers to the School's activities.

> I find - the idea that, once people have got a PL, they can "back off" - and there are people in this place who are blocking posts for others until they retire, unfair!

For the senior management of the Business School there is the challenge of both motivating and rewarding perceived effort, while simultaneously encouraging flexibility in working arrangements, and diverse activities in response to changes in the educational environment. There is the concern to encourage commitment and identification with the Business School, while at the same time wishing to avoid adopting an overly prescriptive, "managerialist" approach with regard to either prescribing, and rewarding, staff behaviour and performance. For some staff, the ensuing uncertainty

regarding the relationship of rewards to effort, results in calls for greater clarity and specification of such criteria. Paradoxically, this appears to require a more prescriptive approach to management within the School, something which many see as conflicting with the desire for professional autonomy.

To some extent, the apparent confusion regarding the links between rewards and effort symbolises the complexities of organisational change which the School is undergoing. As one respondent observed,

> I think the reality is that people do have to work a damn sight harder to get the rewards from the system than used to be. The rewards are now also more varied - research, travel. But these are not perceived as "rewards" by everyone.

Such a comment indicates something of the confusion and uncertainty experienced by individuals attempting to make sense of a changing work environment. The ambiguity regarding both the nature, and allocation, of rewards lends itself to accusations of inequality of opportunity, and unfairness with regard to the processes by which they are allocated. It also reflects some degree of uncertainty and confusion on the part of many staff regarding the manner in which they make sense of the changes confronting them within the workplace.

Changes to both the external and internal environments of the Business School have necessitated increased effort by individual members of staff, which has in turn prompted concerns regarding both the increased pressure of work, and feelings of uncertainty regarding the future. In terms of the cultural milieux of the School what emerges is a number of ostensibly conflicting images. The order and cohesion expressed through the formulation of the School's business plan, or organisational chart, does not adequately reflect the range and diversity of activities undertaken by different groupings among the staff. Likewise, to simply list the varied activities in which staff are engaged does not reflect the personal ambiguities and uncertainties experienced by individuals as they seek to both make sense of, and influence the processes of organisational change within which they are located, and which constitute the changing arena within which they act out their working lives and personal careers.

## Making Sense of the Case Study

As the investigation of the Business School progressed it became increasingly apparent that the complex and contradictory nature of the changes staff within the School were experiencing did not fit neatly into any one cultural model.

In terms of utilising a cultural typology with which to analyze, or represent, the complexity of the situation, Meyerson and Martin's (1987) suggestion of

using a three paradigm model - Integration; Differentiation; and Ambiguity - with which to provide successive interpretations and accounts of the cultural milieux in order to adequately reflect the complexity of the situation, emerged as the most appropriate. While such an approach acknowledges the difficulties involved in cultural analysis, presenting three differing analyses does not necessarily convey the processes by which such apparently contradictory accounts are reflected in the thoughts and behaviour of the actors involved. Therefore, the three-paradigm model was used to sensitize the writer to the paradoxes and contradictions which inevitably confront a researcher investigating any organisation undergoing change, rather than providing a template for analysis.

Indeed, as indicated earlier in Chapter Three, as the research process unfolded it became apparent that in seeking to relate expressions of ethical concern to organisational culture, it was appropriate to contextualise the contemporary concern with both phenomena within a broader, meta-theoretical analysis of contemporary society.

The desire to study organisational culture reflects the acknowledgement of the complex nature of social experience. Simultaneously, it also reflects the concern to impose some form of meaning and order to that complexity. As such, the investigation of the Business School's cultural milieux is an attempt to impose an order and comprehensibility to a complex, ongoing process of organisational change. Just as some respondents likened attempts to manage academic staff to "herding cats" or "sweeping treacle uphill", attempting to capture the depth and complexity of the School's cultural milieux is an intriguing, but ultimately forlorn activity. The more that one seeks to present an image of comprehension and clarity, the more one risks imposing a personal, subjective order upon the social experiences of others.

In contrast, two alternative analyses are presented below, both of which seek to contextualise the Business School within different analytical frameworks reflecting contrasting interpretations of the current situation. As will be argued in the ensuing chapter, it is the latter analysis which is found to be most useful in providing a means of accounting for the contemporary interest in business ethics.

**Contextualizing the Case Study: Sheffield Business School - Postmodern or Anomic?**

The literature on the use of the case study as a research method indicates its potential contribution to both "theory testing" and "theory building". Inherent in such an approach there is the need to locate the analysis of the empirical data within an explanatory theoretical framework. The time-scale within which the current research was undertaken, provided the opportunity for a process of iterative self-reflection concerning the way in which the research data could be best theorized.

Initially the intention had been to locate the analysis of the Business School within the literature concerning the analysis and interpretation of the "postmodern organisation". On further research and reflection however, it was found that it was possible to locate the concept of postmodernity within a more encompassing analysis of the changing nature of modernity. As indicated below, it is possible to contend that many of the issues arising from the case study, while being amenable to analysis within the context of postmodernism, can also be located within an analysis which interprets them as being indicative of anomie, of which postmodernism itself may be said to be one contemporary expression.

The elaboration of this theoretical argument, and its relevance for the analysis of business ethics as a contemporary phenomenon is undertaken in the following chapter. This, brief account, indicates something of how the analysis of the empirical data developed during the course of the research.

## The Business School as a Postmodern Organisation

Sheffield Business School may be considered as exhibiting many of the practices and attributes which, according to some, may be taken as characterising the "postmodern organisation". While this may be true with regard to specific organisational characteristics as indicated in the organisational literature concerned with postmodernism, it is also instructive to relate the very concept of the "School" to what De George (1986; 1987) has termed a "field"; a concept used to indicate the interdisciplinary nature of business ethics (see also, McHugh, 1988). By applying this term also to Sheffield Business School, it is possible to suggest that both business ethics, as an area of academic discourse, research, and organisational practice, and the concept of the "School" as an institutionalised form of organisational structure; coordinative practice; educational discourse; and academic practice, exhibit certain characteristic similarities. It is contended that both the "Business School" and Business Ethics, are expressions of the concerns and ambiguities falling within the broad area of business and organisational activity in an era of "Late"; "High" or "Reflexive Modernity"; what others refer to as the "Postmodern Era"; and others still to the advent of the "Information Society".

Restricting oneself, initially, to a consideration of the "Business School", one may contend that this organisational form exhibits a number of "postmodern" tendencies:

1. The bringing together of hitherto discrete areas of academic disciplinary study.

2. Such areas of study include both the "hard" quantitative subjects, such as statistics; and the "soft" qualitative social sciences, such as sociology, and psychology.

3. In addition, the constitution of certain study areas, such as "Decision-making"; and "Information management", represent areas of study which intentionally seek to integrate these two educational strata together.

4. Particularly important in this respect, as being both an area of interdisciplinary integration and practice, and also symbolising the practical, applied, ethos of the School, is the subject-area of "Corporate Strategy". This interdisciplinary area of study also symbolises the concern within the business community, and contemporary society generally, to both comprehend, and control the processes of change affecting business behaviour and organisational practice, thereby reducing the uncertainties, ambiguities, and anxieties concomitant with ongoing changes to the structure of business; commercial practices; technological processes; and forms of work and employment.

   The changes in the very way in which this area of organisational study and business practice may be analyzed and understood, as indicated by Whittington (1993); Mintzberg (1994a&b); and Stacey (1993) also serve to indicate the importance of this area of study as both epitomising and symbolising the concerns and anxieties of the contemporary period.

5. Within the School, the composition of the "Subject Groups", representing both an administrative mechanism of control and coordination, and an area of academic discourse and study, are also indicative of a "blurring" and partial integration of traditional academic demarcations and boundaries.

   For example, the Subject Group known as "Organisational Behaviour and Human Resource Management", comprises staff whose academic "pedigree" or background includes: sociology; psychology; industrial relations; personnel management; and training and development. The areas of teaching undertaken by members of the group includes among others: organisational behaviour; decision-making; organisational change; the social implications of information technology; business ethics; research methods; womens' studies - without referring to the more obvious subject-areas of: industrial relations; personnel management; and training and development.

6. Developing the above point, many of the academic courses provided within the Business School - without taking account

of those provided by other Schools to which Business School staff provide a variety of academic contributions - likewise symbolise attempts to provide coherent educational mechanisms which facilitate the integration and "cross-fertilisation" of academic disciplines, by the encouragement of discourse; critical analysis; and practical application:-

a. The structure, content, and teaching practices used on the MBA is perhaps the most obvious example within the School.

b. The current range of MSc courses provided by the School:- HRM (Human Resource Management); OD (Organisational Development); ISIM (Information Systems in Management); Marketing; International Business - likewise provide somewhat more limiting examples of the above-mentioned processes.

c. The core-area of study provided by the Undergraduate Programme - Business Studies - provides yet another example of the above.

d. As does the structure, composition, and assessment mechanisms characteristic of BTEC.

7. The internal structure and coordinative mechanisms of the School, are likewise representative of many of the current concerns regarding modes of organisational design; control and coordination; and work and employment. All of which reflect managerial concerns with facilitating improvements in organisational efficiency and effectiveness; innovation and creativity; and increased levels of staff commitment to and identification with the School. In this respect, the School exhibits a complex mix of both "traditional" - modernist forms of organisational practice - and non-traditional - "postmodernist"- attempts to encourage innovation and creativity with relation to: course provision and content; teaching processes and the educational experience; research and publication activities; and the undertaking of consultancy. To what extent new (postmodernist) forms of activity are simply being added - or "bolted on" - to existing managerial structures, or whether they symbolise a more far-reaching process of organisational change is open to varying interpretations.

As such, the Business School may be viewed as being a particular "sub-set", or example of the wider practices and procedures operated by the University.

a. The structural form of the Business School - a matrix - one "arm" being Courses, the other comprising the Subject Groups, symbolises the concern to both epitomise and facilitate flexibility towards both the provision of educational courses, and among staff within the School.

b. The contradictory nature of the School structure in that there is both a School Executive and a School Management Group which provides the "strategic direction" and undertakes a review of the School's activities. In this respect the School exhibits aspects of both a "hierarchical" and a "flat" organisation.

c. The increasing use of part-time teaching staff: RVL's; Teaching Associates; non-permanent staff members whose salaries are met by contract-generated incomes.

d. The introduction of innovative forms of organisational sub-systems: the Research Centres; the creation of half-time teaching and research posts; the creation of a number of Phd-studentships.

e. The possibility for members of the teaching staff to be both primary and secondary members of a Subject Group, thereby facilitating and encouraging the cross-fertilisation of discussion, research, and teaching practices among the members of the six Subject Groups within the School.

f. The formal and informal processes by which individual members of the teaching staff are encouraged to "negotiate" their own individual mix of activities and duties with regard to teaching timetables; contribution to individual courses; administrative duties; research activities; and thereby participate in the design and composition of their own "measurable outputs", by which their contribution to the

overall activities of the School may be identified, and evaluated.

g. The increasing concern with, and importance attached to, by the School management with the construction of indices of "measurable outputs" - quantifiable indicators such as: book publications; contributions to refereed academic journals; the gaining of research grants; membership of prestigious external bodies, by which the individual contribution of staff members may be identified and assessed.

h. The increase in "cost consciousness" within the School. Indicative of the concern to increase the efficiency of course provision and use of resources within the School.

i. The ambiguous role of the Subject Leader within the School. Embodying aspects of both manager and leader, the position symbolises current concerns among staff members regarding the increase in "managerialism" within the School and the relative decline in "collegiality" and "professional autonomy".

j. The concern expressed by many respondents regarding both the increased numbers, and power, of administrative staff within the School, while simultaneously complaining of a lack of resources available for educational purposes. Such expressions indicate both the concern with the increase in "bureaucratization" and "managerialism" within the School in terms of administrative procedures and requirements, and also the concern with the extent to which such procedures and regulatory requirements are externally imposed upon the School by the central administration of the University.

8. The concern expressed by respondents concerning the perceived increase in:- instrumentalism; individualism; competitiveness; the power and influence of cliques and informal networks; and the reference to individuals adopting "coping strategies" as a means of dealing with the stress and uncertainty arising from the ongoing process of change, combined with the continued process of the intensification of work - are symbolic of the tensions arising from the changes

taking place within the work environment of the School, and indicate something of how these are being responded to by individuals in a behaviourial sense, and also how they are being perceived and evaluated by others.

9. The very concept of the "Business School" and its embodiment in educational content and practice, serves to illustrate the changing, and problematical, nature of hitherto traditional/conventional approaches to both business practice, and the conceptualisation of the business organisation within contemporary society.

a. It indicates the reflexive processes by which "business" as a collectivity of individuals and interest groups, is required to question both their role within the wider society within which they are situated, and beliefs concerning the ways in which business practice should be conducted, and the organisational structures and forms which may best facilitate desired practices.

b. The current emphasis within business education upon such concepts as: Total Quality Management; Business Process Re-engineering; Culture management; Organisational change; the Learning Organisation, and more recently, Business Ethics, and Corporate Social Responsibility, can all be perceived as being indicative of an ongoing process of self-reflective appraisal and change.

c. Such processes indicated above, also serve the function of re-legitimizing the role of management within the business organisation, and the functional necessity and importance of business in the eyes of both students of the School, and indirectly, the wider community.

d. The "mix" of activities undertaken by academic members of staff: lecturing; course administration; research; consultancy; publication - also serves to reinforce and legitimate the role of the School as providing a "bridge" between the abstract, "ivory tower" image of academia, and the practical necessities of the commercially-oriented business organisation.

10. The Business School may also be seen as both embodying and illustrating the increased commodification of education and its marketing as a consumption good. This can be seen in:-

    a. The increased importance attached to income generation through: course fees; consultancy; and research grants.

    b. The re-designation of students as "customers" within the School.

    c. The development of customer-focused degree courses, e.g. MBA courses tailored to meet the perceived needs of specific clients; short courses designed for client organisations.

    d. The concern with "student numbers" as both a source of income, and as an index of the School's attractiveness to potential customers.

11. The perceived importance of the issues of "gender" and race" within the educational system, and the institutional mechanisms by which they are addressed within both the University and the School - namely, "codes of practice" - also illustrates how the School is representative of both wider social issues and concerns reflecting broader socio-cultural changes, and the means by which it is sought to deal with them. The role of codes of practice as a mechanism of regulation and control, represents a particular example of a form of culture management concerned to both encourage the internalisation of individual standards of behaviour, while also legitimating the imposition of administrative mechanisms of control. In this respect, codes of practice may be seen as embodying elements of both "administrative" and "individual" mechanisms of control (Hopwood, 1974; Johnson & Gill, 1993).

12. The particular combinations of control mechanisms within Sheffield Business School, encompass all three of Hopwood's (1974) types of control, and, mediated through the formal processes of managerialism and administrative-bureaucratic procedures; notions of individual and collective professional autonomy and responsibility; and informal individual and collective practice and behaviour, provide a particularly complex amalgam of control processes. As such, this provides am example of the contemporary concern to achieve

organisational flexibility and coordination through the encouragement of individual autonomy, while maintaining commitment to the overall objectives of the organisation.

13. These organisational objectives may be said to include those of: efficiency; effectiveness; quality; profitability; commitment; flexibility; innovation; and creativity. It is interesting, and relevant, to observe that these objectives bear more than a passing resemblance to the contradictions noted by Legge (1989) regarding the concern of Human Resource Management for promoting the "value of integration" (1989:29). In this respect, the tensions and contradictions identified by respondents as being present within the School may be taken as representative of a wider set of problems faced by organisational management in a period of ongoing change and uncertainty - the era of "postmodernity" or "reflexive modernity".

14. The importance of Image within the School. The presentation of Sheffield Business School to the external social world through the construction of glossy brochures; pamphlets; face-to-face "networking", presenting the School in terms of: competence; efficiency; creativity; innovation; relevance, and professionalism.

## The Business School as an Expression of Anomie

There is, however, an alternative interpretation which can be made with regard to Sheffield Business School - one which also locates the phenomenon of postmodernism within a broader explanatory and theoretical framework of analysis. Emile Durkheim, within the sociological literature of the post-war period has tended to be given a somewhat muted, and in some quarters, unfavourable coverage, especially when viewed against the writings, and theoretical perspectives attributed to both Marx and Weber. The "conventional" view has been to present Durkheim in terms of being a conservative, a functionalist, and a positivist - all "damning" descriptions for the predominantly critical, and interpretively-inclined sociology of the 1960's and onwards.

More recently however, Durkheim's contribution to sociology, and his theoretical analysis of social change has been re-appraised. The interpretation of Durkheim utilised here, drawn from the analyses of Mestrovic (1991; 1992; 1993) and Cladis (1992), present Durkheim as being a much more critical interpreter and theoriser of industrialisation. In Mestrovic (1991) analysis of Durkheim's theoretical conceptualisations, postmodernity can be located within the framework of Durkheim's concept of "anomie" (Mestrovic, 1991:14, See also pages: 28-29 and 202).

If, for the moment, one takes anomie as expressing a state of "infinite desires" (Mestrovic, 1991:51) resulting in feelings of uncertainty and ambiguity, then it can be contended that many of the concerns expressed by the respondents from the School can be interpreted as manifestations of anomie:-

1. The uncertainty concerning the appropriateness of behaviour both towards other members of staff, and towards students.

2. The ambiguity of having to determine how to best "present" oneself to both one's academic peers and also one's managerial-academic colleagues. This is manifested by the increasing pressure to perform and produce forms of approved academic output, while also displaying appropriate social behaviours indicative of one's commitment to, and involvement with the Business School.

3. The ambiguity mentioned above, is further complicated by the need to manifest the appropriate "balance" of behaviours and comments which convey contradictory and ambivalent messages to recipients. In this respect, there is the perceived, felt, need to both convey indications of one's commitment to the School, while simultaneously conveying messages which suggest that one's commitment is at least, in part, an "act" or "social performance" which both the actor and the audience are aware of.

For some respondents at least, their knowledge and understanding of the literature on "culture management" and "organisational control mechanisms" provides a discursive format within which they can both objectify their situation by reference to the appropriate theoretical constructs, and critiques of the concept, while simultaneously conflating analytical critique with personal opinion. Over time, there has evolved among some members of the School, a highly sophisticated sub-cultural language which combines compliance and dissent and which implicitly acknowledges the situational context of power and inequality within which they are located. The use of humour, and cynicism regarding the more obviously managerialist requirements placed upon them as academics, combined with limited forms of rebellion and sabotage - such as using another colleagues code while using the photocopier - are evidence of a variety of what may be termed psychological and linguistic, and behaviourial "coping strategies".

4. Another source of uncertainty arises from the need to resolve the tensions and contradictions arising from the changing emphasis within the School concerning behaviour. This is perhaps most evident in the conflicting pressures towards individualism, versus identification with and commitment to the informal groupings and cliques within the School. This may take a number of forms. There are the comments concerning the increased competitiveness among staff, combined with a harkening back towards a perhaps somewhat romanticised vision of academic collegiality. There are also the unfavourable comparisons made between the increase in "managerialism" with the concern to maintain and protect "professional autonomy".

5. One might also mention in this context the comments made by some respondents regarding the increase in "instrumentalism" among staff. Whether such behaviour constitutes a cynical manipulation of the School's control procedures - an expression of "compliance" rather than "commitment" to the School's objectives and formal criteria for the evaluation and control of staff behaviour, is open to interpretation

6. Likewise, the comments concerning the decrease in "trust" within the School. Is, on the one hand, a criticism of the increase in managerialism and control procedures within the School. It also, however, sometimes reflects a degree of uncertainty regarding the motives that may be attributed to individuals' behaviour. Whether an action is seen as indicating that an individual is meekly complying with a managerial requirement to manifest commitment to the School, or alternatively, is perceived as evidence of a particularly adroit example of cynical gamesmanship on the part of the said individual, may depend on the historical circumstances and group affiliations of the individuals involved. For some staff the actions of those located on another site - Totley or Dyson - will perhaps always tend to be viewed with suspicion.
Perhaps more important in the current context, is the increased suspicion and doubt which is manifested regarding individual action among staff within the same location, and among members of the same, or overlapping, informal groupings within the School.

There is an obvious danger here of over-emphasis and exaggeration. The intention is not to present a picture of "organisational paranoia". It is the intent however, to indicate something of the tension which does exist between affectivity and individualistic instrumentalism within the School, and the

problems of interpretation and evaluation which this presents for analyzing and understanding interpersonal behaviour and discourse among respondents.

7. Another area of uncertainty which is manifested by at least some of the respondents, concerns the perceived clash of values and priorities between "education" and the attendant beliefs associated with "professionalism" -and, the perceived increase in "managerialism" and the emphasis on the "marketing" of the School and its activities. For some, this is perceived in terms of the "clash of cultures" between Totley and Dyson, but it would be inaccurate to view this as being merely the result of a mixture of geographical separation and the effects of past departmental divisions within the organisation.

8. Anomie is perhaps a particularly appropriate concept for analyzing the information provided by the respondents because it "bridges the gap" between a predominantly sociological and/or psychological analyses of behaviour. The acknowledgement of the personal dilemmas arising from ambiguity and uncertainty are inherent within the concept itself. It is the dilemma of individual choice: how should I behave?; how should I make sense of the behaviour of others?; how should I evaluate such behaviour?; what is the appropriate response? It can be contended that anomie, when used in the broader context of Durkheim's concerns with the social and individual problems arising from industrialisation, or what is now termed modernity, provides a more useful theoretical framework for making sense of the information provided by the respondents.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the writer does not intend that any pejorative or evaluatory interpretation be place upon the above analysis. If the School, and those located within it's environs can be said to manifest symptoms of anomie, then this inevitably also applies to the present writer. It is worth noting in passing perhaps that Durkheim contended that a certain amount of anomie was inherent during any process of change. It is the amount, or degree, of anomie that is the cause for concern.

The advantages of utilising a Durkheimian analysis are threefold. Firstly, it locates the phenomenon of postmodernity within a more comprehensive and explanatory theoretical framework. Secondly, as will be argued in the following chapter, anomie, can also be used to locate and explain both the current interest in, the theoretical formulations, and also the forms of practice, of business ethics. Finally on a purely personal note, the present writer feels more psychologically content, secure in the knowledge that he is

anomic rather than postmodern with regard to both his behaviour and outlook on the world.

## Notes

1. McNay (1995) identifies four cultures: Collegium, Bureaucracy, Corporation, and Enterprise, which he suggests can be found, in varying combinations, within most universities.

2. Writers such as Deal & Kennedy (1982), Peters & Waterman (1982), Smircich & Morgan (1982), Schein (1983, 1985) and Sherwood (1988) all indicate the importance of leadership in the creation of organisational culture. The literature relating to the relationship between leadership and ethics is, in a sense, more mixed, indicating that leaders can have both positive and negative roles to play in influencing the nature of organisational ethics (Howell & Avolio, 1992; Ludwig & Longenecker, 1993; Hollander, 1995; Carlson & Perrewe 1995; Murphy & Enderle 1995). No attempt was made to pursue this issue during the research due to both the inexperience of the writer as a researcher, and to the sensitivity of such a topic, particularly when conducting research within one's own employing organisation.

3. As one Course Leader observed,

   "you've got good staff, and they're being pulled down a certain route - like research. And you can't get them for your programme. I think that's a big problem."

4. For example, where some members of the Subject Group have workloads which consist of predominantly undergraduate teaching, while others have avoided this by securing teaching on postgraduate courses.

5. One member of staff reflected on this change in attitude and behaviour, and the personal conflicts which can result, by observing,

   "I am jumping on the band-waggon. I don't want to miss out! I'm probably, to a certain extent, ambitious. But in quieter moments I do query myself, and try to find a compromise."

6. One respondent acknowledged that his response had been to try and develop an area of semi-autonomy for himself. As he expressed it,

   "My survival strategy in this institution has been to create 'local sanity', and to get on with things I want to get on with."

7. An exercise which was recently repeated in 1996. As well as providing a "league table" for purposes of comparison, the classificatory scheme is

also important for the allocation of research funding between institutions. One's placing therefore helps to determine the future provision of funds, and hence the ability to undertake research activity.
Having established a favourable ranking compared with other ex-polytechnic Business Schools after the 1992 HCFCE exercise, there is considerable concern that the School's standing in this respect should not fall.

8. For purposes of internal administration a lecturer's timetable is understood to comprise 460 hours for the undertaking of formal duties, and 100 hours for undertaking work-related activities. This 100 hours is known as "self-managed time".

9. Another indication of the change in managerial style can be seen with regard to the question of holiday leave. Staff are now required to record, or "book" their request for leave with their Subject Leader. Not only does such record-keeping suggest a loss of trust, and a questioning of the professional integrity of members of staff, there is also the suspicion that at some future time such requests may be refused where it is believed to conflict with the needs of the School.

10. An additional point of tension was that the administrative staff located within the Business School were not members of the School, but belonged to the central University administration. The School was required to pay the University for their secondment to the Business School.

    It is important to note however, that most respondents while critical of the administrative function within the University and School, drew a distinction between this and their personal relationships with administrative personnel within the School. There was some acknowledgement that, similarly to academic staff, administrative personnel had also experienced an increase in their workload in recent years.

11. To some extent this reflected a greater concern on the part of the University authorities to ensure a more equitable treatment of female applicants, reflecting the greater concern nationally for sexual equality. Having said this, six of these were either part-time members of the teaching staff, or occupied research posts at the time the research was carried out.

12. Of the ten female respondents four made no overt mention of the issue during the interview, while only three of the twenty-five male respondents mentioned the subject. Rather than suggesting that this indicates the marginality of the subject, it may be more accurate to suggest that, given the non-directive nature of the interviews, it indicates that the subject of

gender within the School may be located within Schein's third level of cultural analysis, the taken-for-granted assumptions which are often left unspoken. In this respect, it is relevant to observe that the membership of the three departments which formed the original core of the School were predominantly male.

13. At the time that the interviews were being conducted, the Business School had one female Principal Lecturer.

# Chapter Six
# Locating the "Field"

## Introduction

This chapter is concerned to achieve two objectives. Firstly, to briefly discuss the relevance of the casestudy of Sheffield Business School to the investigation of business ethics. Secondly, to provide a justification of the argument that business ethics, viewed as a product of social knowledge and practice, can be seen as being both an expression of, and reaction to, contemporary anomie.

## Sheffield Business School: A Symbol and Expression of Anomie

The previous chapter provided two alternative analyses of Sheffield Business School, concluding that an analysis of the School as an expression of anomie provided a means of both locating postmodernity and business ethics within a more comprehensive and explanatory theoretical analysis.

In considering the interpretation of the qualitative data derived from interviewing the respondents, it is possible to discern something of the personal anxieties and uncertainties of academic staff confronted with the need to respond to, and make sense of, ongoing organisational change. To some extent, it is a process of change over which they have only a limited, and varied, amount of control and influence. Their evaluation and response to such changes in their working environment are understandably both mixed and, in part, inconsistent.

In resenting the increase in "managerialism" and "administration" they express the concern for an apparent decrease in personal autonomy in the conduct of their academic activities. Their uncertainty regarding the criteria for career and promotion reflects the confusion arising from the changed nature of control and evaluation mechanisms within the New Universities. Increasingly such confusion is being resolved as it becomes apparent that the New Universities are seeking to emulate the Old, with regard to obtaining: publications in refereed journals; research funding; the presentation of refereed papers at conferences; and the undertaking of consultancy work.

Amidst the turmoil and uncertainties, and also the opportunities created by such changes, however, there are also concerns which reflect both the personal trauma associated with change, and the changing nature of higher education - per se. In this respect, Durkheim's concept of anomie is doubly important in that he acknowledges the importance of the emotional and irrational aspects of humanity, as well as the power of human reason (Mestrovic, 1991:37). This is important in that it provides a counter-balance

to the apparent concern with the ostensibly "calculative" and "instrumental" nature of respondents' reaction to changes in their working environment. To focus attention solely on the "instrumental rationality" of individuals' response to perceived increases in managerialism and bureaucratization within the Business School would be to misrepresent and oversimplify the nature and complexity of their behaviour and what it symbolised.

In an important sense the opinions and actions of respondents do not simply represent attempts to reorient personal effort and behaviour to comply with the changing nature of the School's systems of control and reward mechanisms. They also reflect a concern to try to recapture some element of the quality of working life which is felt to have been lost, or at least put in increasing jeopardy. Many respondents, in commenting upon the "intensification of work" were not only lamenting a loss of perceived autonomy, they were also expressing anxiety about a qualitative change in the work environment. For many respondents, this was expressed by concern for the relative decline in the importance attached to teaching. While this is an expression of the traditional emphasis within the Polytechnics upon teaching as opposed to research and consultancy, to over-emphasize the historical dimension would be an over-simplification. To "explain" respondents concern with the declining importance of teaching as an educational activity as an expression of "cultural lag" or as an anachronism would be to miss the point. One of the most positive aspects of the transformation of the Polytechnics into Universities has been the speed and enthusiasm with which staff have been willing to embark upon research. If anything complaints have focused upon the lack of time and resource available for it, rather than criticism of the activity itself. Rather, the anxiety regarding teaching symbolises a concern with the changed climate and context within which university education activity is required to be undertaken.

In this respect it is probable that staff in both Old and New Universities share a common fear regarding the changing nature of their working environment. The demise of feelings of collegiality and the increasingly competitive nature of inter-personal relationships reported by respondents within the Business School, is mirrored in the increased competitiveness between Universities for funding, and the increased importance attached to relative ranking in terms of performance in research activity.

Traditionally a distinction has been made between "town and gown" to denote the special nature of educational activity as distinct from the activities of trade and commerce. Increasingly over the last decade or so, this distinction has become blurred, as the market has set up its stall within the halls of academia. While one may sensibly question the desirability and justification for the "ivory towers" of academia and the merits of ostensible detachment and isolation from the hustle and bustle of social life, there are grounds for concern that the increasing commercialisation of higher

education reflects the overly intrusive role of the market economy in social affairs.

Increasingly the economic concerns of commerce and business has become part of the academic culture, and managerial discourse has superseded or replaced academic concerns. Organisations seeking information and knowledge have become "clients"; students have become "customers"; research centres have become "profit centres", and departments and courses have become "cost centres". The desire to attain, and pass on, academic knowledge has become transformed into the concern for competitive advantage, measured in terms of: research rating; research funding; and comparative publications record. The academic "customer" becomes the object of marketing campaigns extolling the advantages of one institution over another, the merits of various courses extolled in glossy brochures, "open days", and student fairs. The consumer-of knowledge (payable by credit card) is provided with a plethora of choice by the packaging of knowledge into handy, bit-size modules and units which are carefully organised into undergraduate and postgraduate "programmes" in order to ensure the cost-effective utilisation of institutional resources. With the increasing emphasis upon the marketing of knowledge, and the presentation of education as a desirable consumption good, there is a need to ask cui bono? The increasing penetration of the market economy into the field of higher education has prompted considerable uncertainty among staff concerning what their response should be, and also how to evaluate and make sense of their personal working environment and their relationship with colleagues.

Undertaking the research within Sheffield Business School and investigating the situational factors affecting respondents' views regarding instances of inequity and unfairness highlighted two important issues. Firstly it illustrated the need to locate respondents' perspectives within an account of the changing cultural milieux of the School. Secondly it emphasized the need to contextualise the analysis within a wider structural and theoretical framework. It was this realization which prompted the analyses of the Business School in terms of both postmodernism and anomie. It was in undertaking this task that it became apparent that just as Business Schools are products of the contemporary educational environment, then business ethics too can be viewed as a social product of theoretical discourse and practice reflecting contemporary concerns and uncertainties.

## Business Ethics: An Expression of Contemporary Uncertainty

Writers such as McHugh (1988) and De George (1987) in providing accounts of the history of business ethics indicate that its evolution and development has been periodic, each phase reflecting changing concerns and priorities. Just as Whittington (1993) indicates the evolution of the corporate strategy-making process as being a product of the interaction between changing business practice and socially produced knowledge, so

too can business ethics be perceived as the product of evolving social thought and concern regarding the role and practices of the business community, and its duties and responsibilities to the wider social community. The latter part of the twentieth century has witnessed a growing concern with the activities of various sections of the business community. The United States of America has subjected the actions of their business system to critical examination through the trial and punishment of such figures as Michael Milken, Ivan Boesky and Dennis Levine (Stewart, 1991; Levine & Hoffer, 1991; Kornbluth, 1992). Similarly, Britain in recent years has come to question the ethics and probity of business behaviour as a consequence of such examples as: Barlow Clowes, Blue Arrow, BCCI, the Guinness affair, the British Airways - Virgin Airways controversy, and Robert Murdoch. Such instances of dubious business behaviour have not only prompted questions concerning the adequacy of legislation and forms of corporate governance to regulate business activity, but also raised doubts about the motives and behaviour of business leaders (Truell & Gurwin, 1992; Beaty & Gwynne, 1993; Gregory, 1994).[1]

Such "scandals" serve to focus public attention, providing particular instances of ethical concern regarding both institutional practice and individual behaviour. In addition however, the closing decades of the twentieth century are also witness to a broader public uncertainty regarding the benefits and effects of contemporary developments in both business practice and the application of science and technology within the work environment. While some extol the application of modern technology to the pursuit of economic growth, others question the impact of information technology upon both the quality of working life and employment (e.g. Hines & Searle, 1979; Jenkins & Sherman, 1979; 1981; Handy 1984). Both the concern for continued economic growth, and the emphasis by recent British governments upon monetarist economic principles advocated by the "New Right" have resulted in controversial business behaviour. Such emphasis upon free market competitive behaviour by business has, along with technological developments, resulted in changes in both organisational structures, and employment practices which have come under increasing comment and criticism (e.g. Atkinson & Gregory, 1986; Handy, 1989; 1994; Storey, 1989; Clegg, 1990; Whitaker, 1992).

It would be reasonable to conclude that many of the reasons behind the current interest in business ethics reflect a concern with the effects of the contemporary emphasis upon neo-classical economics, which emphasize the responsibility of business and management to pursue shareholder interests in terms of profits (Friedman, 1962). Such a focus upon profit maximisation could be contrasted with stakeholder models of the business organisation which contend that management have a variety of stakeholder or interest groups to take into consideration when developing and pursuing their particular strategies within the marketplace (Freeman, 1984; Freeman & Gilbert, 1988; Evan & Freeman, 1993). Such an ongoing academic

debate illustrates one dimension of the ongoing uncertainty with regard to what constitutes acceptable business behaviour.

Relevant as it may be however, contrasting stockholder versus stakeholder theories of the firm does not provide an adequate explanation for the contemporary interest in business ethics. Such an approach focuses attention upon the meso-level of analysis, the interrelationships between organisational and individual behaviour. While important, it is contended that it is necessary to develop an alternative approach, one which will acknowledge the relevance of all three levels of analysis pertinent to business ethics - the systemic, the organisational, and the individual (Goodpastor, 1985), and locate them within an analysis of contemporary society.

**Business Ethics: Postmodernism or Reflexive Modernity?**

It has become axiomatic to associate the contemporary period with change - social, cultural, environmental, and technological. Change has resulted in uncertainty, including how best to classify and account for the nature of contemporary society.[2] For some, the current period, or era, marks a definite break with the past, being described as "postmodernity", while for others postmodernism is perceived as being continuous with modernity. Giddens (1991) for example, contends that the current period can be best understood s being "late" or "high" modernity (1991:3) while Touraine (1995) contends that hitherto we have been living in a world of "limited modernity" (1995:366) and are only now on the brink of entering "full" modernity. Whether one chooses to interpret contemporary society as being modern or postmodern has implications for both the study and practice of business ethics. Best & Kellner (1991) indicate something of the potential impact of a postmodernist approach to business ethics when observing that postmodern theory,

> rejects modern assumptions of social coherence and notions of causality in favour of multiplicity, plurality, fragmentation, and indeterminacy. In addition, postmodern theory abandons the rational and unified subject postulated by much modern theory in favour of a socially and linguistically decentred and fragmented subject.
>
> (1991:4)

Such an approach poses considerable problems for conventional ethical theory which assumes a coherent, rational actor as the human subject of its concern. Bauman (1993) in advocating a postmodernist approach to ethics contends that one needs to reject the traditional reliance on a belief in moral absolutes, rationalism, and universalism, and accept that nowadays the individual,

> moves, feels and acts in the context of ambivalence and is shot through with uncertainty.
>
> (1993:11)

The radical critique contained within a postmodernist approach to ethics is that prescriptive, or normative ethics is essentially a mechanism of social control by which the individual's analysis and evaluation of behaviour is a product of the social production of knowledge (MacIntyre, 1966; 1981; Rose, 1989). In rejecting universalism and the model of the individual as a predominantly rational being, Bauman contends that the normative and prescriptive emphasis found in much of conventional, or traditional ethical writings is a product of the bygone modernist era. As such, he and other postmodernists contend that the individual is now able to develop one's own moral values and beliefs through one's ongoing experience of social life. In acknowledging the uncertainty and ambiguity inherent in much of contemporary society Bauman recognises that some people may seek guidance and help from others and become "expert-dependent" (1995:12) for ethical advice on how best to live one's life. For Bauman, such dependence is misplaced. One cannot learn how to live one's life from an "ethical guidebook" or an "ethical guru". The responsibility for dealing with and resolving such uncertainties is one's own. The individual must accept the inherent uncertainty of modern life and develop one's own solution to the age-old question: how should one live one's life? [3]

For others, the concept of postmodernism and the contention that it represents a radical break and discontinuity with the past is distinctly problematic (See e.g. Harvey, 1989; Best & Kellner, 1991; Bertens, 1995). Writers such as O'Neill contend that postmodernism is the "child of modernism" (1995:16), while Mestrovic maintains that apart perhaps for the concept, postmodernism is neither new or original, contending that,

> it pretends to rebel at modernity, whereas it merely extends it"
>
> (1991:28)

In rejecting postmodernists' claims for a radical break with modernity it is also necessary to challenge their imagery of modern society as one of order, rationality, and comprehensibility. Such a description is a gross-oversimplification of the processes of social, cultural and technological change undergone in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Rojek (1995) illustrates this by distinguishing between two dimensions of modernity, "Modernity 1" and "Modernity 2". The former, he contends, is associated with functionalism, positivism and pluralism, displaying a concern for order, while the latter reflects a concern for disorder and change, having,

> a more poetic emphasis upon phenomenology and experience

(1995:79)

In a similar vein Berman (1982) challenges the view of modernity as being one of excessive order, continuity and comprehensibility contending that,

> Modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, "all that is solid melts into air".

(1982:15)

Berger et al (1973) acknowledge the effects of such a process in noting that for all the social changes brought about by modernity, with its emphasis upon progress, rational thought, and the application of science and technology,

> it has not fundamentally changed the finitude, fragility and mortality of the human condition. What it has accomplished is to seriously weaken those definitions of reality that previously made that human condition easier to bear.

(1973:166)

It is in such observations that one can locate the concerns of postmodernist writers within a somewhat more conventional analysis of the contemporary era. One which acknowledges the uncertainties and doubts engendered by a period of profound and rapid period of socio-cultural and technological change. Giddens provides such an analysis in contending that modernity may be understood as constituting,

> a post-traditional order, but not one in which the sureties of tradition and habit have been replaced by the certitude of rational knowledge. Doubt, a pervasive feature of modern critical reason, permeates into every life as well as philosophical consciousness, and forms a general existential dimension of the contemporary social world.

(1991:2)[4]

By extolling the power of human reason and holding out the promise of continual progress, modernism has paradoxically institutionalised criticism and uncertainty concerning what the criteria of progress should be, the methods by which it might be obtained, and whether it is even desirable. The increasing secularisation of Western society, as a byproduct of the Enlightenment and industrialisation, may have only succeeded in replacing

the belief in an immutable God-given order to life with a growing realisation of the uncertainty and fallibility of human reason. Berger et al (1973), Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) all indicate how such uncertainty is pervasive within contemporary Western society.
At the macro-level, there is the doubt concerning the idea of "progress" achieved through the process of industrialisation. Beck, in observing that "risk" is inherent within the period of reflexive, or high modernity contends that,

> Risk may be defined as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself. - Along with the growing capacity of technical options (Zweckrationalitat) grows the incalculability of their consequences.
>
> (1992:21)

At an organisational level, the perceived need to cope with uncertainty and insecurity has been institutionalized by the development of various rationalist corporate strategy making processes (Whittington, 1993) and forms of organisational flexibility (Clegg, 1990).[5] The latter has often entailed repeated exhortations to maintain high performance by stimulating innovation and creativity, and the concern to instill employees with a sense of moral involvement and commitment to their employing organisation as traditional compliance-based forms of management control have proved less effective than expected (Wood, 1989).[6]

Simultaneously, the individual is also the subject of intensive and pervasive attempts to both influence and increase their consumption patterns and lifestyle arising from the need to stimulate and maintain the market economic system.

It is hardly surprising that some commentators have pointed to the variety and intensity of means by which the individual is constrained and encouraged to construct a concept of self-identity which reflects the power of external mechanisms of classification and evaluation (e.g. Rose, 1989; Townley, 1994). The paradox here, as Berger et al (1973) indicate is that the very variety and incommensurability of such pressures to conform generates uncertainty.[7] If this were not sufficient to engender doubt and uncertainty Beck observes that,

> Traditional forms of coping with anxiety and insecurity in socio-moral milieus, families, marriage and male-female roles are failing.
>
> (1992:153)[8]

Here Beck appears to echo writers such as Bellah et al (1985; 1992) regarding the demise of "community" in contemporary society. With community came psychological security, an awareness of one's role, position and social identity in a relatively stable, and comprehensible, social world. With the breakdown of community comes normlessness, uncertainty, and anxiety (See also Etzioni, 1995). An important consequence of this, for understanding the contemporary debates regarding both the nature, and concerns of business ethics is that the consequences of such contemporary uncertainty must also extended to the study and investigation of business ethics. Primeaux succinctly expresses the consequences of such cultural uncertainty for the study of ethics in observing that,

> we can no longer presume a common, universal, prevailing consensus for personal and corporate ethics. Neither academic philosophy, religious morality, or legal proscriptions command the kind of definitive, universal authority that we once thought they had. That is, we can no longer assume that everyone with whom we work ascribes to some single, all-encompassing ethical code.
>
> (1992:780)[9]

An important factor in the creation of such a cultural context has been the pervasive dissemination of free market ideologies and the extension of free market practices into hitherto separate spheres of social activity. The ensuing confusion and uncertainty regarding the legitimacy and appropriateness of business practice has aggravated existing concerns regarding the role of business within society and doubts surrounding the efficacy of free market practice. It is in such a cultural context that one can discern the attraction of, and raison d'etre for, business ethics as a contemporary expression of both uncertainty and the desire for guidance in an apparently increasingly confusing and anarchic social world. In terms of locating the analysis of business ethics within a theoretical framework it is contended that utilising Emile Durkheim's concept of "economic anomie" as an expression of the uncertainty and ambiguity experienced within contemporary society, as a consequence of the increasing dominance and penetration of free market economics into various spheres of social activity provides an appropriate vehicle of analysis.

## Durkheim, Economic Anomie and Postmodern Uncertainty

Durkheim is usually represented as an apologist of the status quo within society, presenting a functionalist account of the social order. Writers such as Mestrovic (1991) and Cladis (1992) however, provide an altogether more complex and radical account of his writings and social concerns. For Cladis, Durkheim was concerned with developing a theoretical reconciliation between the ostensibly opposing theories of liberalism and communitarianism. While the former conceptualises the individual as being

an autonomous, independent social being, the latter presents an image of the individual as being socially determined, a product of, and captive to, the cultural milieux within which s/he is located. Cladis contends that Durkheim's primary concern was to provide a theoretical account of how the two might be reconciled and in the process providing,

> a communitarian defense of liberalism
>
> (1992:2)

A central concern of Durkheim was what he saw as the over-emphasis upon individualism arising from the process of industrialisation as it developed in France around the turn of the century. He was particularly concerned with the effects of the market economy upon social and individual life.

Far from being an exponent and supporter of the Enlightenment project with its concern for progress and the emphasis upon the individual as being an inherently logical, rational being, Mestrovic contends that, for Durkheim, the individual was an altogether more complex entity. The Enlightenment emphasized the importance of the "mind", and the power and value of human reason. Durkheim challenged what he saw as a distorted view of humanity by stressing the importance of feelings, emotion, and compassion, as being important if not essential facets of the human condition.

At the individual level of analysis therefore, Durkheim presented a powerful critique and challenge to the predominant view which presented the individual as being the embodiment of rational thought and action. Inherent within this critique of the Enlightenment model, or image, of the individual however, there lies a more far-reaching critical analysis which questions the very rationale of what has come to be known as the Enlightenment project - the pursuit and attainment of progress by the application of human reason to social and technological development. It is Durkheim's suspicion and mistrust of the promise of the Enlightenment, when combined with his concern to counter what he saw as the intrusive and adverse influence of classical economic liberal thought and practice upon both the individual and society, which gives Durkheim a contemporary relevance for business ethics.

An important expression of this is Durkheim's understanding of the relationship between "moral individualism" and "moral polymorphism". The latter concept is defined as the variety of social spheres and collectivities which provide a mixture of social settings and experiences within which the individual is located and which contribute to the richness and diversity of the individual's social and moral beliefs. It is the richness and diversity of such social experience which, ideally, would contribute to the complex and dynamic nature of Durkheim's image of "organic solidarity" as an ideal-type presentation of modernity, as opposed to the somewhat more straightforward form of social solidarity or community found in pre-modern,

or traditional societies, which he termed "mechanical solidarity" (Durkheim, 1933).

An appreciation and analysis of the impact of moral dissensus is implicit in Durkheim's work (1933) where he recognises how the plurality of social settings, within which the individual gains social experience and a sense of self-identity, gives rise to conflict and uncertainty regarding what constitutes appropriate behaviour. The processes by which the individual develops an understanding of the social world is then, essentially a dialectical one - which is reflected in his analysis of modern society (Mestrovic, 1991:43) and which also accounts for the prevalence of anomie within modern society.

> Anomie is an integral aspect of modernity, because it signifies change.
>
> (1991:44)

For Durkheim, it was the increasingly hegemonic influence of liberal economic thought which gave particular cause for concern. Like Adam Smith, Durkheim believed that economic self-interest should be embedded within a plurality of other, contending, social and moral relationships.[10] Individual economic self-interest, inherent in free market economic philosophy, should not be the predominant ethos or morality determining an individual's social behaviour.

It is the balance, or interrelationships, between these competing moral and social spheres - Durkheim's "moral polymorphism" - which has arguably altered in the closing decades of this century. It is the increasing penetration, and influence of free market ideology into other areas of social life which has resulted in the increasing prevalence and effects of what Durkheim identified as economic anomie. Mestrovic draws attention to the far-reaching effects of this when observing that,

> Economic anomie occurs when people's material desires override their real conditions, and economic anomie eventually produces a variety of other forms of anomie - political, domestic, religious, and so on.
>
> (1991:175)

The above quotation is particularly important in that it draws attention to the pervasive nature of the impact of economic anomie upon social life. It both emphasizes the importance of the market economy for contemporary society and indicates the variety of ways in which the effects of such ideological and cultural dominance are not restricted purely to issues of trade and commerce but have far-reaching effects upon a broad spectrum of social life.

It is here therefore that one can discern the link between Mestrovic's and Cladis' analysis of Durkheim's writings, and the concern of writers such as Giddens and Beck regarding the uncertainty and ambiguity inherent in contemporary society. Similarly, writers on postmodernism, such as Harvey (1989), Featherstone (1991; 1995) draw attention to the importance of the market economy and the development of consumer culture for both society and the individual.[11]

Writers such as Wolfe (1989), Bellah et al (1992) and Stivers (1994) all draw attention to the impact of the free market system upon social attitudes and behaviour. Stivers draws attention to the contemporary importance attached to "efficiency"[12]; Bellah et al indicate the extent to which market pressures have come to overshadow and dominate social life[13]; while Wolfe draws attention to the influence of the Chicago school of economics upon contemporary social life and beliefs.[14] The end result, is what Bellah et al suggest is the acceptance by many people of the,

> market maximiser as the paradigm of the human person
>
> (1992:91)

Relating such concerns to Durkheim, one finds that his observations regarding early twentieth century French society appear to have a strong contemporary relevance to late twentieth century British society.

> government, instead of regulating economic life, has become its tool and servant. - Industry, instead of being still regarded as a means to an end transcending itself, has become the supreme end of individuals and societies alike. Thereupon the appetites thus excited have become freed of any limiting authority.
>
> (1952:255)

This is not to suggest that the power of free market philosophy has entirely overwhelmed other modes of social thought. Wolfe, for example, notes that the Chicago school - perhaps best represented by the writings of Milton Friedman - is not representative of the academic discipline of economics as a whole. Nor indeed is it immune from criticism, even from writers of a conservative persuasion such as Gray (1993).[15] Likewise Giddens (1991:195) in drawing attention to the persistence, and indeed the resurgence of religious belief in present times, draws attention to the essential plurality and continuity of social beliefs.[16] Such an observation is important in order to guard against the claim that what one is describing is tantamount to a somewhat crude form of economic determinism.

Having noted the need for caution however, it is still possible to accept that laissez-faire economic thought and policies are pervasive.[17] Wolfe draws

attention to this in observing the importance of the Chicago school, and how their perspective differs from that of Adam Smith's. He contends that Adam Smith was a pluralist in the sense that he acknowledged that economic activity was only one of various areas of social activity which collectively provided a moral environment within which economic activity took place. However, in the justification of capitalism offered by Milton Friedman and his adherents,

> claims are not made for a capitalist economy within a society held together by non-capitalist values, but, for the first time in Western intellectual history, for a specifically capitalist society, in which market freedom will serve as the moral code defining every form of social interaction.
>
> (1989:30)

Such a conceptualisation of modern society allows one to contextualise contemporary unease and anxiety surrounding the advocacy by some of a policy of privatization within British industry in recent years. The application of market principles to such important public services as healthcare, education, and transport have prompted concern whether there are not particular areas of social activity where it is inappropriate to apply free market economic principles and practices to their management and provision.[18]

Thus "progress" achieved through the application of human reason, has become allied to the claimed benefits of economic liberalism. For Wolfe (1989:30) this ideology encourages a competitive individualism grounded in the notion that one's moral obligations to others can only be addressed by first giving precedence to one's own desires and priorities. For Mestrovic (1991) this alliance has exacerbated the level of social fragmentation. Its emphasis upon the individual, the ephemeral, the new and consumerism, when combined with a tacit relativism, constitute the preconditions of what others term the postmodern epoch. Mestrovic contends that,

> postmodernity is an age in which only a sleepwalker could deny that contemporary portraits of life resonate with Baudelaire's and Durkheim's portraits that emphasize cynicism, disgust and decadence. Our age is drowning collectively in cynicism and anomie, yet the positivists tell us that anomie does not exist and cannot be measured.
>
> (1991:107)

As such, contemporary anomie is expressed as a perpetual dissatisfaction with life combined with a desire for improvement, but also reflecting an uncertainty regarding what constitutes "improvement" and how it may be obtained. The emphasis upon individual choice amid a plurality of options,

with no clear criteria for either guidance or evaluation, has resulted in a cultural milieux which appears to have institutionalised anomie through the encouragement of both individualism and competitiveness. Such anomic conditions however are both obscured and legitimated through the allusion of rationality and order provided by belief in "progress" and the exercise of individual choice.

For postmodernists, the contemporary social situation appears to offering contradictory interpretations. On the one hand there is the view which contends that the individual has been completely subjugated by the forces of modernity. This perspective, which is sometimes associated with the writings of Foucault, appears to reject humanism, as itself being a product of modernity contending that the very social conceptualisation of the "self" is a product of modernist thought and practice.[19] Even the way in which one thinks about oneself as a social being is a social product from which there is no escape (See e.g. Rose, 1989; Townley, 1994). Alternatively, there is a more optimistic interpretation to Foucault's writings which contends that, paradoxically, both the variety and intensity of such forms of social conditioning provide a means of liberation and provide both the impetus and the means of what Foucault terms "permanent resistance".[20] For postmodernists such as Bauman it would appear that it is under such conditions that a "postmodern ethics" becomes possible. The individual is forced to come to recognize the ambiguity, doubt, and confusion present in contemporary society and develop his or her own principles, values, and virtues by which to live one's life.[21] As he expresses it,

> The postmodern mind is reconciled to the idea that the messiness of the human predicament is here to stay. This is, in the broadest of outlines, what can be called postmodern wisdom"
>
> (1993:245)

For Mestrovic, what others perceive as expressions of postmodernist thought and lifestyle, is more accurately understood as contemporary expressions of anomie. As such they are both explicable and potentially subject to change. In drawing attention to the contemporary relevance of Durkheim's concept of anomie Mestrovic not only provides a rebuttal to postmodernist claims, but also a means of contextualising the contemporary interest in business ethics within an explanatory framework which avoids the danger of devolving into a re-affirmation of prescriptive ethics.

## Business Ethics: An Expression of and Reaction to Anomie

### Why Durkheim?

In contending that business ethics can best be understood as being both an expression of, and a reaction to contemporary anomie it is appropriate,

initially, to indicate why a Durkheimian perspective was selected, and in particular the concept of "anomie". Clearly, academic writers are subject to a variety of analyses and interpretations of their work over the years, as they are re-analyzed through the medium of contemporary theoretical paradigms and schools of thought. In acknowledging the influence of the writings of both Mestrovic and Cladis the author does not claim that they provide a definitive account of Durkheim's writings, merely that they have provided the means by which is has been possible to reconsider the contemporary nature and role of business ethics at the present time, and to provide an explanation for the somewhat contradictory interpretations which present it as being simultaneously an oxymoron and critical to the well-being of both corporation and society.

There are a number of interrelated reasons why this perspective was chosen, which collectively illustrate the contemporary relevance of Durkheim's work for an understanding of late-twentieth century society and the somewhat paradoxical role of business ethics. Given the contemporary, if contentious, impact of free market ideology and practice, Durkheim is appropriate in that he adopts a critical, but not a rejectionist, view of the role and impact of the free market economy upon both society and the individual. In addition, in seeking to acknowledge and comprehend the tensions that arise from the concern for both change and continuity within society, in particular, his concern to recognize the tensions between the conflicting desires for both individualism and community, give him a relevance which is reflected in current concerns with the apparent demise of community as expressed by such writers as Bellah et al, (1985; 1992); Stivers, (1994) Etzioni, (1995); Lasch, (1995).

His approach to understanding and accounting for the process of change and the effects of industrialisation, mediated by the market economy, upon both the individual and society is as Mestrovic (1991) observes an essentially dialectical one, which thereby acknowledges the complexity of the processes involved.

In expressing a holistic approach to understanding the individual, emphasizing the importance of both rationality and emotion he provides an important counter-balance to the over-emphasis which others place upon the idea of human rationality and the importance of scientific thought for furthering human and social development. In this respect he would seem to express a similar concern to that of some feminist writers regarding the adequacy of contemporary models of human behaviour which stress the importance of objective and rational thought, rather than the importance of human concern and care for others (e.g. Gillian, 1982; Lloyd, 1984; Held, 1993; Ferber & Nelson, 1993; and Nelson, 1996).

Through his concept of anomie he displays a concern with the processes involved in the social production of knowledge and their effects upon both the individual and society. In addition, the concept of anomie as an

expression of a concern with the interrelationships between human thought, feeling, and self-identity, is reflected in contemporary concerns with questions of the self, human identity, and behaviour - issues which also find expression in the business ethics literature.

While traditionally classified as one of the "founding fathers of sociology" his broad interest in the human condition transcend the somewhat narrow boundaries of contemporary academic disciplines, displaying an interest in sociology, psychology, economics, politics, moral philosophy, and religion. In this respect he could be said to reflect the transdisciplinary ethos of reflexive modernity which questions the appropriateness of contemporary parameters of academic thought and practice. With regard to business ethics, reference has already been made to De George's metaphor of the "field" as a means of expressing the multidisciplinary nature of the subject. Finally, the concept of anomie provides a link between both the individual and social milieux within which s/he is located. With regard to business ethics and the differing "levels of analysis" which various writers have identified, it re-emphasizes the interrelationships between them and the need to adopt a holistic approach to the subject. In addition, Durkheim's concern with the importance of the "corporation", serving as a link between the individual and the state, when related to contemporary concerns with the business corporation, can be seen as reflecting the current concerns regarding the role of the business corporation within society.

## Business Ethics, Business, and Anomie

A glance at the contemporary management literature indicates that increasingly managers are confronted with the need to confront and overcome the challenge of paradox in their working lives (See e.g. Pascale, 1990; Handy, 1994; Cannon, 1996).[22] Paradox presents managers with the need to develop innovative ways of resolving organisational problems in that it symbolises the realisation that traditional methods of management are no longer sufficient for solving the challenges presented by today's business environment. Along with the concern for order, control, and efficiency, there is the concomitant concern with adaptability, autonomy, and cooperation. Paradox symbolises the uncertainty confronting management as to how best to conduct their affairs.

It is in such a context of uncertainty that business ethics, conceptualised as a "field" of both discourse and practice, can be seen as both a reflection of, and consequence of, the cultural uncertainty manifested by Reflexive Modernity, while simultaneously providing a vehicle for its critique, modification, and renewal. In this respect it can be conceptualised as being both an expression of, and a reaction to, the prevalence of anomie within contemporary society.

In utilising the metaphor of the "field" to describe business ethics De George (1987:20) draws attention to both the complex and interdisciplinary nature of

the subject, but also the concern to impose order and comprehension upon an area of increasing social relevance. In this respect, business ethics can be seen as constituting both a means by which to analyze and evaluate business behaviour, while simultaneously itself constituting an object of research and analysis.

Both the complexity and theoretical controversy inherent in the "field" of business ethics is symptomatic of the anomic nature of both Western societies per se and business ethics as a social product of knowledge and practice. In analyzing the parameters of the business ethics "field" one can identify both differing academic and theoretical approaches. In particular, the gradual shift in emphasis from a predominantly prescriptive/normative approach, towards a greater interest in descriptive/contextualist approaches illustrates the evolving nature of the subject, and reflects the shift in the social sciences from positivistic to interpretive research.

As such, the field is one of academic contestation in which academics from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds engage in both research and debate concerning the parameters of the subject, and the utility or otherwise of differing methodological approaches to research. Whether business ethics is a sub-field of moral philosophy or is truly transdisciplinary is the subject of continued controversy, as is the question of whether it constitutes a coherent academic discipline in its own right (Trevino & Weaver, 1994; Weaver & Trevino, 1994; Enderle, 1996).

Such debates reflect both the diverse and complex nature of the phenomenon, and the fact that as an area of application and knowledge business ethics challenges existing academic and disciplinary parameters of knowledge. The health and vibrancy of the subject area can be seen by both the increasing number of books and journals devoted to the subject, and the growth of sub-divisions within the academic literature.[23] In this respect the metaphor of the "field" is particularly appropriate in that it symbolises the uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding the very parameters of what constitutes business ethics?

However, the fact that business ethics as both a subject of academic research and business application has grown in importance in the last ten to fifteen years is itself an expression of doubt regarding the efficacy and social utility of free market ideology and practice.[24] As such it has contributed to a reconsideration of the role of free market philosophy within contemporary society, along with other modes of academic and social criticism. In this respect claims that business ethics is either an oxymoron, or an apologist for the market system (Niemark, 1994) reflect an inadequate understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon.

What can be contended is that as a product of the contemporary period business ethics as a field of knowledge, discourse, and practice, reflects the uncertainties of the cultural and academic milieux within which it is located.

## Business Ethics and the Search for a Rationalist Solution

The desire to (re)establish some form of normative moral order to business activity is perhaps most clearly articulated in the "prescriptive" (Buchholz, 1989; Stace, 1988) approach to business ethics. From this approach Business ethics entails the rationalist application of normative ethical theory to business (e.g. Ozar, 1979; Davis, 1982; Velasquez, 1988; Hoffman & Moore, 1990). It is based on the notion that ultimately there exists eternal moral principles which are universally applicable and cognitively accessible to everyone engaged in the conduct of business.

While there is some disagreement as to whether it is possible to fully elucidate a coherent set of absolute ethical principles, there is the desire to formulate a framework of ethical standards which can be recognized as acceptable approximations of those principles. Within this framework are encoded prescriptions about what is right and wrong, good or bad, with regard to the conducting of business activity. This involves specifying both what should be done, and what should be avoided, in order to achieve those prescribed standards of behaviour.[25]

The basis of such a prescriptive approach to business ethics is the assumption that it is possible to discern what is good and bad in the conduct of business affairs and develop guidelines that will promote both the desired behaviour and decision-making criteria on the part of business practitioners.[26] Whether it is believed to be sufficient to evaluate the behaviour of business practitioners, as an expression of cultural compliance, or whether it is thought to be more desirable if the individual actually believes, and internalises such ethical values reflects ongoing debates concerning both the feasibility, and desirability, of culture management. In this respect one can see how a prescriptive approach to business ethics could be utilised by management as an additional means by which to reinforce their control over employee behaviour.

Such an approach however is not unproblematic in that there is not unambiguous agreement as to what the criteria for evaluation should be. The plurality of normative ethical theories means that there is no neutral position from which one may evaluate the opposing claims. The business practitioner is confronted by an array of competing prescriptions derived from different moral philosophies from which to select one as a basis for guidance.[27] Alternatively, s/he may try to combine the differing approaches in the hope of identifying an optimum solution to the problem with which they are confronted. This raises the problem of whether such differing moral philosophies are commensurable and are amenable to being combined (See MacDonald & Beck-Dudley, 1994).

It would appear that such attempts through the use of prescriptive business ethics to (re)establish a moral order to business will be unsuccessful in that such attempts confront the inherent dissensus within the subject. In this

respect, the rationalist "solution" to the moral uncertainty within business fails in the sense that it is itself an articulation of anomie. As Raphael (1981:10) implies, perhaps the best that moral philosophy can provide for the business community is to both encourage and facilitate critical self-reflection, rather than provide definitive guidelines on which to base behaviour.[28]

As a potential alternative to the hegemony of moral philosophy within the subject, others have developed a different approach which has been variously described as "descriptive" (Goodpastor, 1985) or "contextualist" (Hoffmaster, 1993; Winkler, 1993) seeking to develop a broader multidisciplinary approach to the subject through contributions by disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and management studies (McHugh, 1988:16) which have made De George's metaphor of the "field" increasingly appropriate. It is from academic developments within such social scientific disciplines that one can see where non-rationalist approaches to business ethics appear to originate.

**Business Ethics and the Rejection of Rationalism**

In contrast to a prescriptive approach, a relativistic approach to business ethics shares Durkheim's rejection of rationalism as the defining, or primal characteristic of humanity. The contention is that the ways in which individuals reason about ethical issues, and thereby construct ethical principles and beliefs as a guide to their behaviour, varies between and within different societies, both contemporaneously and historically.
If ethical judgement about human behaviour are an outcome of variable human experiences and subjective processes (Payne & Giacalone, 1990; Primeaux, 1992), then schemes of ethical principles are closely connected with the cultural milieux within which individuals are located. The current interest in international business ethics (e.g. Donaldson, 1989b; De George, 1993) may be seen as reflecting such concerns.[29]

As such, the ethical dimension of human behaviour is a product of the social and historical context of that behaviour and is therefore relative to the particular constellation of beliefs, values, and recipes of knowledge that characterise a particular culture (MacIntyre, 1966).[30] In effect, therefore, it is impossible to objectively, or neutrally, construct a set of universal ethical principles applicable to all individuals regardless of social and historical contexts. Any attempt to do so will involve the creator(s) of such a code in attempting to impose his/her culturally-derived values on others.[31]
Even though there may be a degree of social agreement about morality within and between modern societies, and even though claims may be made regarding their universality, there is no absolute set of ethical principles that can be identified and applied to either evaluate or prescribe the behaviour of others. For the relativist there are no rational cognitive grounds for determining right and wrong.

Such an approach is illustrated by the postmodernist approach towards business ethics by Bauman (1993), as outlined earlier, contending that prescriptive ethics are essentially mechanisms of social control and domination in which the individual's analysis and evaluation of both their own and others' behaviour is a product of the social construction of knowledge. It is the very liberating potential arising from the very fragmentation and multiplicities of social experience which create the possibility for the individual to escape from the hegemony of prescriptive injunctions regarding lifestyle and behaviour. In such a context the very excess of anomic social conditions becomes a positive force for personal reflexivity and development. In this respect one could contend that Bauman is overly optimistic that out of confusion and uncertainty will come personal enlightenment.[32]

As Mestrovic contends, postmodernism is a contemporary expression of the anomic conditions characteristic of reflexive modernity. As such there can be no guarantee that the outcome will be personally liberating for everyone. If anything the reverse may be true with the creation of an illusionary freedom created and mediated by the notion of consumer choice.[33] Postmodernism appears to require, and allegedly creates the pre-conditions for, a critical reflexivity on the part of the individual. As such it poses an important challenge to modernist orthodoxy. However, it also contains its own contradictions arising from its support for relativism. As Mannheim has observed,

> the assertion of relativity itself claims absolute validity and hence its very form presupposes a principle which its manifest content rejects
>
> (1952:130)

Therefore a relativistic approach to business ethics would seem to be a contradiction in terms in that any one source of guidance would appear to be as good as another.[34] In this respect the postmodernist approach to business ethics is also an expression of anomie. Given the current uncertainty regarding what is appropriate business behaviour it is appropriate to reiterate Mestrovic's observation that,

> coldhearted, decadent commercialism almost always lurks behind postmodernist "fun"
>
> (1991:15)

The implication of such an observation is that not only is postmodernism an expression of contemporary anomie. In addition, given that postmodernism is itself a manifestation of uncertainty, the illusion of "postmodernist choice" serves to reinforce hesitancy and indecision regarding the establishment of acceptable standards of business behaviour. It this respect it also serves to

reinforce claims by free-market ideologues that a further extension of the free-market into other areas of social activity will further enhance freedom of choice for the consumer.

## Notes

1. A further example of the confusion surrounding what constitutes ethical propriety in business is illustrated by the controversy surrounding the withdrawal of a Department of Trade and Industry publication entitled "Marketing Your Business". The forty page publication recommended going through competitors rubbish bins, lying about who one represented, and making friends with secretaries from rival firms who had access to a photocopier (Cusick 1994a; 1994b)

2. Parker (1992) distinguishes between "periodisation" and "epistemology" although the distinction may be more useful as a heuristic device than as a means of accurately dividing the relevant literature into clearly identifiable groupings.

3. Bauman's observation in some ways echoes Illich's (1977) earlier critique of professionalism in which he and his fellow writers object to the way in which the process by which professions achieve social legitimation creates a relationship of dependency between them and their clients.

4. David Lyon expresses a similar view of contemporary modernity when observing that,

   > Modernity's forward-looking thrust relates strongly to belief in progress and the power of human reason to produce freedom. But its discontents spring from the same source; unrealized optimism and the inherent doubt fostered by post-traditional thought.
   >
   > (1994 : 19)

5. Recent years have also witnessed increasing managerial interest and involvement in "risk management" and "risk assessment" procedures by which it is hoped to either pre-empt, or at least prepare for potential future technological and environmental disasters (e.g. Eeckhoudt & Gollier, 1995; Glendon & McKenna, 1995).

6. It is within this context that one can comprehend the increased interest by employers and management in the study of organisational culture and particularly approaches to culture management. Likewise it also helps to explain the contemporary interest in the concept of "trust" by academics and its potential application within the working environment (Fukuyama,1995; Hosmer, 1995; Mayer et al, 1995). Before one may

consider empowering employees, one must be able to trust them not to abuse their new-found autonomy.

7. All the more so, given that the emphasis of an increasingly consumer-oriented culture is for the individual to accept and adapt to the novel and the new, whether it takes the form of merchandise, fashion, or lifestyle (e.g. Chaney, 1996).

8. Another example of contemporary uncertainty can be seen in the debates regarding the social construction of traditional concepts of both gender roles and the duality of male and female identities (See e.g. Butler, 1990); Epstein & Straub, (1991); Garber, (1992, 1995); Bullough & Bullough, (1993); Bornstein, (1994); Hausman, (1995); Ekins & King, (1996); Ramet, (1996).

9. Such conditions of uncertainty also help to account for the shift in emphasis within business ethics from prescriptive to contextualist accounts. In addition it also provides an explanation for methodological debates concerning how best to study the phenomenon (See e.g. Robertson, 1993; Brigley, 1995).

10. As Wolfe observes,

> It is not simply that Adam Smith never thought to extend the principle of self-interest to all social relations; on the contrary, Smith recognized that to do so would destroy the very realm of morality that made economic self-interest possible in the first place. (1989 : 30)

In similar vein, Plant contends that,

> If the culture of society comes to be dominated by self-interested conceptions of morality, and business relationships turn into a wholly buccaneering, enterprising sort, then there is at least some danger - if there is no other countervailing set of moral values not based upon self-interest - that the moral assumptions on which the marker exchange rests could, in fact, be eroded by a culture of self-interest. (1992 : 87)

11. Although commentators such as Best & Kellner (1991) criticize postmodernist writing for ignoring, or at least seriously under-emphasizing the importance of the political and economic structure of Western society, one can contend that the postmodernist concern with consumerism does implicity acknowledge the importance of the market economy.

12. Stivers contends that,

> By the late twentieth century a new lived morality has become dominant - Jacques Ellul has termed it "technological morality", a morality geared entirely toward efficiency. (1994 : 8)

In a somewhat similar vein, Ritzer has written of "The McDonaldization of Society" (1993).

13. Bellah et al maintain that,

> In our desire to free the individual for happiness, we Americans have tried to make a social world that would serve the self. But things have not gone quite according to plan. We have made instead a world that dwarfs the self it was meant to serve. Especially in the economic realm Americans find themselves under the pressure of market forces to which the only response seems submission. (1992 : 85)

14. Speaking of the Chicago school of economic thought Wolfe contends that they constitute a "second bourgeois revolution" believing that,

> If completely free choice is good enough for the economy - it ought to be good enough for everything else. (1989 : 51)

15. In contending that traditional conservatism does not subscribe to either the hegemony of free market ideology, or to the belief in the perfectibility of the free market mechanism as an expression of rational thought and practice he observes that,

> Any government animated by a conservative outlook takes for granted the imperfectibility of human affairs. (1993 : 47)

He also voices a similar concern to that which both Mestrovic and Cladis attribute to Durkheim, namely the increasing pervasiveness of the free market into other areas of social life.

> It is recognised, therefore, that a society held together solely by the impersonal nexus of market exchanges, as envisaged by Hayek - and other neo-liberal thinkers, is at best a mirage, at worst a prescription for a return to the state of nature. (1993 : 52)

16. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind both the historical and contemporary influence that religious thought has had upon business ethics (e.g. McHugh, 1988; Vogel, 1991). One might also note the furore that De George's 1986 paper "Theological Ethics and Business Ethics" aroused among the business ethics community. More recently, in Britain, one could observe the controversy which arose from the publication of The Common Good" by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England

and Wales (1996) which was perceived by some to be an implicit endorsement of Labour Party policies.

17. Although in drawing attention to Durkheim's contention that economic anomie may, in time, give rise to other expressions of anomie, such as political and religious, Mestrovic draws attention to both the unforeseen and unintended consequences of the contemporary hegemonic nature of free market economic thought and practice.
In practical terms one can contend that concerns regarding the effects of introducing free market principles into both the National Health Service and Higher Education provide examples of this.

18. In this respect the Business School can be seen as indicative of the way in which the ideology of the market economy has exerted an increasing influence upon the content and provision of higher education. Education is increasingly presented, and marketed as a "consumption good". The student, perceived as a "customer" exercises individual choice within a "cafeteria style" range of educational units and degree courses. What Wolfe (1989:73) describes as the extension of the "shopping mall" to education, may also be presented, and legitimated, in terms of organisational innovation and flexibility in response to the needs of business and the changing educational environment within which the Business School is located. In personal terms the resultant changes have given rise to concerns regarding the changing nature of teaching and feelings of uncertainty and unfairness arising from changes in the internal structure and operations of the School.

    The Business School can be seen as both symbolic and representative of reflexive modernity. An organisation which reflects an awareness of the problems and contradictions arising from the process of modernity, and the desire to resolve them through related processes of reflexive analysis, reappraisal, and planned change in order to provide "solutions" for both its customers and its own membership through the application of managerial processes of financial and social control concerned with improving internal efficiency, cost-reduction and organisational effectiveness.

19. If one accepts such an analysis however, one is left to wonder how Foucault and other postmodernists managed to avoid, or escape from such an all-embracing process of social control in order to inform their readers of the danger?
Such pessimistic accounts of contemporary society appear to echo the imagery of Orwell's "1984".

20. See, for example, Best & Kellner (1991); McNay (1994); and Simons (1995) for more optimistic accounts of Foucault's writings in which the

contemporary conditions of modernity provide the means of self-liberation from the forces of social conditioning and control.

21. Alternatively, the relativism inherent in such conditions of uncertainty could also encourage feelings of both toleration, indecision, passivity, and disinterestedness which could result in a tacit support of, or acquiescence to the status quo.

22. Cannon, for example, indicates eight "key paradoxes": Act now for the long term; Growth through consolidation; Building individualistic teams; Getting more for less; Thinking local, acting global; Simultaneous growth of economic regionalism and economic nationalism; Winning through action oriented reflection; Consolidating internal capabilities while reengineering (1996:137).

23. Recent years, as well as witnessing an increase in publication of general business ethics textbooks have also resulted in the publication of more specialist texts dealing with the application of business ethics thought and practice to particular areas of managerial concern. For example, marketing (Chanko, 1995); information technology and information systems (Johnson & Nissenbaum, 1995; Spinello, 1995; Mason et al, 1995); leadership (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996).

24. In Britain the establishment in 1995 of the "New Academy of Business" under the auspices of Anita Roddick; and the establishment of postgraduate Masters courses at the Universities of Bath (Master of Science in Responsibility & Business Practice), and the University of Leeds and Leeds Metropolitan University (Masters of Art in Business Policy & Professional Ethics), indicate the continued growth of interest in the subject and the desire to combine academic knowledge with the practical needs of the business community.

25. The sometimes overly prescriptive and authoritative forms of corporate codes of conduct and ethics provide a practical expression of such an approach.

26. The increasing interest in developing "ethics training" programmes is one practical expression of this.

27. In business ethics texts the most common choices to which the reader is introduced are those of consequentialism and deontologicalism, it often being left to the reader to decide which approach is personally preferable.

28. In this respect, normative ethical theories could provide a means by which business practitioners could seek to operationalise the concept of the "Learning Organisation" (See for example, Argyris, 1990; Senge, 1990).

29. It can also be seen as one response to the increasing globalisation of the economy, one important consequence of which has been to prompt a questioning of Western modes of thought and behaviour.

30. In support of this view, Sumner (1988) contends that shared ethical systems are social constructions which are bounded by, and relative to, particular cultural traditions from which human actors can never escape.

31. This may help to account for both the attempt to establish international ethical codes, and their number and generality (e.g. Getz, 1990; Frederick, 1991)

32. As indicated earlier however, there is no guarantee that such conditions will result in kind of personal reflexivity and the individual taking responsibility for his/her thoughts and actions. Such excessive confusion and uncertainty could also result in a search for, and acceptance of an ideological perspective which appears to provide clear and explicit guidelines for both imposing order and clarity upon the confusion. Adherence to either an extreme political party, or a religious cult could provide an apparent sense of security under such conditions.

    Rather than creating one's own "ethical instruction manual" one accepts a pre-existing one with the "rules and guidelines" readily available and easy-to-understand.

33. Contemporary anomie as an expression of uncertainty and loss of meaning resulting from the extension of the market economy into other spheres of social life, provides both a means of exploitation and a transitory form of social integration. The progressive differentiation of consumption provides the means of creating a transitory source of identity which is also malleable, amenable to influence by marketing techniques and advertising.
    The plethora of choice provided by a consumer culture may well be aggravated through the impact of information technology providing increased means by which to access more diverse forms of information. The danger of "information overload" is one more expression of contemporary anomie.

34. Unless one envisages the creation of an extraordinary tolerant and pluralistic society, as some envisage developing as a result of the wide dissemination of information arising from the worldwide use of information technology (See e.g. Masuda, 1980), such a scenario is unlikely. On a pessimistic note, the wider dissemination of information and knowledge through the medium of the internet etc. is as likely to reinforce pre-existing beliefs and prejudices resulting in increased intolerance.

# Chapter Seven
# Review and Commentary

## Introduction

This last chapter is concerned with achieving three objectives. Firstly, to provide a summary of the work undertaken and what has been achieved. Secondly, to provide some concluding comments on the contemporary nature of business ethics. Thirdly, to indicate some areas for future research activity.

## Summarizing the Thesis

Chapter one was concerned to identify the historical evolution of business ethics as a socially constructed body of knowledge and practice. It identified the change in emphasis from a philosophical and normative approach to one which was concerned to take account of the descriptive and contextual aspects which influence how individuals both think about business ethics and how they behave within an organisational context.

In distinguishing between the cognitive and behaviourial dimensions of business ethics, the concern was to indicate that it is necessary to take account of the situational context within which the individual is located in order to comprehend how his or her behaviour is affected by the cultural milieux of the workplace.

In addition, the concern was to indicate the need to locate the changing nature of business ethics within a broader analysis of the changing nature of Western society. The changing concerns of business ethics as a social product of knowledge and practice reflects both the changing economic and cultural environment within which the business enterprise is located in the closing decades of the twentieth century, and the increasing concerns expressed by various stakeholder groups concerning the role of business within the community. Business ethics therefore, is an expression of both the desire by the business community to legitimate their activity in the eyes of the wider social community, and simultaneously to increase the loyalty and commitment of their employees to the business organisation operating within a free market economy.

The emphasis on the meso-level of analysis reflects the pragmatic concerns of business practitioners to respond to social criticisms and also to identify additional methods of obtaining employee commitment and identification with the objectives of business.

The contemporary emphasis upon the importance of the free market is illustrated by the way in which business ethics itself, takes on the nature of a

commodity - a body of knowledge and practice which becomes a marketable commodity with both academia and the business community.

Chapter two sought to develop and clarify issues identified in the first. In considering the relationships between business ethics and organisational culture it was contended that both phenomena reflect the acknowledgement of the increasing complexity of the social world and business practice. In addition, both phenomena reflect contemporary uncertainties regarding the nature of academic knowledge and its relationship to business practice. The concern with organisational culture and approaches to culture management reflect a concern to both acknowledge and control the behaviour, attitudes and values of organisational members - although some commentators contend that the desire to manage, that is to control, organisational culture is beyond the scope of managerial abilities.

In a similar fashion it was argued that business ethics - particularly with regard to approaches towards the institutionalisation of ethics via the introduction of corporate codes of ethics, and the desire to "internalise" whistleblowing - reflects a similar concern on the part of business managers to both regulate and modify employee behaviour.

In commenting upon the argument advanced by Ray (1986) that the concern with "corporate culture" provides a means by which managers can create a sense of community and moral order within the workplace, it was contended that Ray's interpretation of Durkheim's concern with morality was misconstrued and that it is necessary to locate the contemporary interest by management with organisational culture and business ethics within a broader and more complex analysis of the socio-cultural and economic environment.

Chapter three dealt with two interrelated aspects of the research process. Firstly, it identified the initial approach adopted by the author, which was to consider the two literatures dealing with the processes involved in researching both business ethics and organisational culture.

It was while considering the former that it became increasingly apparent that while some researchers had made use of surveys and vignettes, or mini case-studies, for a number of reasons identified in the text this was felt to be inappropriate for the present work. It was contended that such approaches did not provide an adequate means of uncovering the complex ways in which the cultural milieux of an organisation may influence, and simultaneously be influenced by, the way in which individuals both thought about and expressed, their ethical beliefs within the working environment. It became apparent that it was necessary to distinguish between the personal beliefs of the individual regarding ethics, and how these may be expressed, both in terms of conversation and discussion within the workplace, and in terms of actual behaviour. It was the realization of the complex interrelationships existing between personal ethical beliefs and behaviour

which prompted the concern to investigate methods of researching organisational culture.

A review and consideration of the literature relating to both the conducting of research into organisational culture and ethnography helped to identify a number of problems confronting the would-be researcher. In particular, the very complexity of organisational culture, perceived as an object of research, presents the researcher with the need to consider how one can simultaneously both express the complexity of the phenomenon while also imposing an order and comprehensibility upon the phenomenon. In addition, the literature concerned with ethnographic research, in drawing attention to the influence and power of the researcher in presenting an ordered account of the situation to the reader, drew attention to the difficulties involved in presenting a "true" or "accurate" account of any such investigation which did not reflect some element of distortion or bias on the part of the researcher as "interpreter".

Secondly, the chapter was concerned to draw attention to the way in which the preparation for, the actual undertaking, and subsequent analysis, of the empirical research served as something akin to a catalytic agent for the author. It helped the author to realize the necessity of locating both the contemporary interest in the study of organisational culture, and the development of business ethics as a product of social knowledge and practice, within a broader theoretical analysis of contemporary society. In doing so, the focus of the research was considerably altered from that assumed at the outset of the undertaking.

Chapter four is primarily concerned with providing the reader with a brief account of the historical context and circumstances prior to the creation of Sheffield Business School, and how this is reflected in the present composition, structure, and behaviourial processes of the School.
In addition, the chapter also provides an account of the processes by which the empirical investigation of the cultural and ethical milieux of the School was undertaken. In indicating the "learning" process by which the author undertook both the interviews and their analysis it indicates the way in which the empirical and conceptual dimensions of the research process prompted a reappraisal by the author of the problems involved in undertaking empirical research.

In addition, in indicating the way in which the analysis of the contents of the interviews was undertaken by the author as a means of imposing some order and meaning upon the substantial amount of data that was collected, it indicates something of the process by which the initial concerns, or focus, of the research began to undergo a significant re-orientation. Just as there was a need to contextualise the concerns and attitudes of the respondents within an analysis of the changing cultural milieux of the Business School, there was the gradual realization that it was necessary to contextualise such phenomena within a broader analysis of the socio-cultural and economic

context within which the university was currently situated. In turn, it became increasingly apparent that in, seeking to "contextualise the context" within which the cultural milieux of the School was taking place, it was also appropriate to seek to understand the context within which the contemporary interest in both business ethics and organisational culture had evolved.

Chapter five was primarily concerned with providing a summary and analysis of the empirical research carried out within Sheffield Business School. In identifying some of the concerns and anxieties of respondents it was contended that it was necessary to locate the interview data within both a historical, and contemporary, social and cultural analysis of the School. The fact that both the School and its members are in an ongoing process of organisational and cultural change is reflected in the contradictions which are identified from the interview data and which gave rise to the various concerns expressed by respondents regarding their working environment. In seeking to locate the findings within a theoretical analysis other than that of organisational culture it was contended that the Business School could be analyzed in terms of embodying some of the characteristics of the "postmodern organisation". However, it was also argued that the Business School could also be seen as an expression of "anomie" reflecting contemporary interpretations of Durkheim's writings on the concept. Such an analysis also views "postmodernism" as being a contemporary expression of the same phenomenon. In this respect it was contended that both the Business School and business ethics can be viewed as constituting "fields" of socially produced knowledge and practice which in their respective ways reflect contemporary uncertainties and anxieties.

Chapter six was concerned to achieve two objectives. Firstly, there was the concern to indicate the relevance of the casestudy of Sheffield Business School for the analysis of business ethics. It was argued that Sheffield Business School, viewed within the context of its role within Sheffield Hallam University could be seen as symbolizing the increasing impact of the market upon the structure, content, financing, and provision of tertiary education within Britain. In personal terms the uncertainties and anxieties expressed by respondents regarding the effects of changes to their working environment indicated both their doubts regarding the effects of such changes upon their role as professional lecturers, and the need to understand their responses as reflecting more than simply an expression of individualistic "instrumental rationality".

Secondly, there was the concern to indicate the relevance of Durkheim's concept of "anomie" for an understanding of the contemporary interest in business ethics. By reference to the works of both Mestrovic (1991) and Cladis (1992) it was argued that Durkheim's writings should be viewed as being both more complex and critical than is sometimes acknowledged. His concern for the effects of the market economy upon social and individual life make him a writer of contemporary significance and relevance.

Likewise his concern to challenge the conventional view of the individual as the embodiment of rational thought and action indicates his relevance for contemporary interpretations of society in terms of "Reflexive Modernity" or "Risk Society".

Durkheim's concern with the effects of the free market economic system upon other spheres of social life is echoed in the concerns of contemporary writers such as: Bellah et al (1985, 1992), Berger et al (1973), Etzioni (1995), Stivers (1994), and Wolfe (1989). In this respect it was argued that Durkheim's concern with anomie has a contemporary relevance to late twentieth century British society and the increased interest in business ethics by both the business and academic communities.
With regard to the notion that contemporary society can be analyzed in terms of "postmodernity" it was argued that not only does such writing over-simplify the nature of modernity - as expressed by such writers as Berman (1982), Giddens (1991), Beck (1992), and Rojek (1995) - but that the concept itself may be viewed as an expression of anomie.
Viewed as a social product of both social knowledge and practice it was argued that "business ethics" can be viewed as being both an expression of, and a reaction to, contemporary anomie.

**Concluding Observations on Business Ethics and Anomie**

Business ethics is an evolving social product of the uncertain times in which we live. An expression of the fear that we are no longer entirely convinced in the infallibility of human reason and its material, social, and cultural effects. In this respect it symbolizes the doubt and uncertainty inherent in the categorisation and analysis of contemporary society as Reflexive Modernity,[1] and also the predominant model of humanity as a rational, reasoning individual. It is in this respect that Durkheim's concept of anomie is both relevant and appropriate in that it reflects the human and personal effects of such doubt and uncertainty, while also inviting a reappraisal of contemporary conceptualisations of what it means to be human.
In focusing attention upon both the personal and societal effects of the extension of the free-market economic system into other spheres of social activity Durkheim's concept of anomie serves a number of important functions. Perhaps most obviously, it suggests the need for caution before proceeding with any further extension of the process of privatisation within the economy. In addition it provides the means of both re-analyzing and re-evaluating the effects of earlier privatizations and their effects upon both the services provided, and also the consequences for employees self-perceptions, changing modes of behaviour, and how they are subjectively interpreted and evaluated.

In a broader cultural context it provides the means for re-assessing the process of economic and technological development, particularly in the post-war period. If one accepts that developments in information technology herald substantial changes in both the social and working environment, and

if society is undergoing a transition from an industrial to an information society, it becomes all the more important to comprehend the means by which this may occur.

If the "economic engine" which powers the process of transition is the free-market economy, then that economic system enhanced and extended through the increasing utilisation of information technology as a means of both increasing organisational competitiveness and extending the reach of the market into new areas of activity may be expected to accentuate the already high levels of anomie within society.[2] It is in this respect that, as Mestrovic contends,

> The most pressing and controversial modern social problems centre on the lack of business ethics, the selfishness of the so-called "me generation", and the rise of rampant hyper-individualism.
>
> (1991:174)

If, as is likely, some variant of the free-market economic system remains the main means by which productive activity is organised in the coming years, it is all the more important that we are aware of what this entails for both the individual and the social community. In this respect, the concept of anomie provides an important medium for investigating the social, political, and cultural - as well as personal - ramifications of free-market economics. In a similar vein, Cladis' statement that Durkheim's writings contained a,

> hermeneutics of suspicion - his assumption that people cannot adequately account for their beliefs and actions because often they are unaware of the social forces that influence them - was aimed not so much at exposing the irrationality of social institutions as at exposing the reductive assumptions of economists and social theorists attending solely to private economic motives.
>
> (1992:32)

- suggests that academics need to remember that their theories and knowledge are social artifacts the construction of which reflects the cultural milieux within which they are located.

It is in this respect that Durkheim's analysis of the problems resulting from the transition from "mechanic to organic solidarity" and his concern with the anomic condition of French society during the early years of this century are particularly appropriate as the millennium approaches. The closing decades of this century have witnessed an increasing uncertainty within academia regarding the nature of knowledge. Postmodernism is perhaps the most obvious example of such uncertainty, although one could also mention

Critical Theory, and more recently the idea of Reflexive Modernity as all, in their respective ways reflecting uncertainty regarding the nature, and construction of social knowledge.

The paradox confronting both academics and business practitioners is that although there is greater awareness of complexity, whether it be in the realms of science or the conduct of business, there is still the desire to manage and control, even if one can no longer be certain of the outcome.[3] It is within such an "maelstrom" of uncertainty that business ethics has risen to greater prominence, reflecting both the internal, and external uncertainties of the business environment. Internally, it reflects the need for reassurance on the part of business practitioners that the activity of business is beneficial for society, while also providing a source of guidance by which practitioners may resolve uncertainties regarding the conduct of their affairs with competitors, customers, employees, and the wider community.

Externally, to the extent that criteria concerning the "ethicality" of business activity is socially accepted, it legitimates the activity of free-market enterprise, while also serving as a means of periodic re-appraisal of business practice.

In a temporal sense, the increased interest and concern accorded to business ethics in Western societies, most noticeable in America, and more recently in Britain, symbolises the uncertainty of the era - whether it be understood in terms of Reflexive Modernity or Postmodernism. Simultaneously it is also presented as a means by which anxieties and concerns regarding the activities of the business enterprise are made amenable to evaluation, and where necessary modification, resulting in a, perhaps transitory, legitimation. However the view of business ethics as affording an objective evaluation of business practice - through the medium of normative ethical theory - is a disingenuous one in that it ignores the fact that business ethics, as a product of social knowledge and practice, is itself a product of uncertain times. It is in this respect that it is both an expression of, and a reaction to the anomic conditions in which we live.

## Personal Reflections and Areas for Future Research

Like any form of research activity undertaking a Phd while both broadening and enhancing the individual's knowledge and understanding of a subject, also makes the individual painfully aware of the deficiencies in one's knowledge, as well as indicating apparent "gaps" in the academic literature. In this respect the desire to continue researching into a particular subject-area appears to provide infinite possibilities for further work. In this brief concluding section the concern is merely to indicate those areas of personal interest to the writer rather than provide an exhaustive list of research possibilities.

During the undertaking of this research it is true to say that my thoughts regarding business ethics have modified in ways which were entirely unforeseen at the outset. Whilst this may be seen as indicating the true research and learning activity of the Phd project, it also resulted in periods of intense uncertainty and doubt as to how best to proceed, as well as resulting in a four month period of absence due to stress. Whilst I can conceptualise my experience as my own very personal expression of anomie - an idea my counsellor did not seem to appreciate - it also indicates something of the contemporary problems involved in undertaking a part-time Phd in the contemporary academic environment.

In terms of contemplating future research, there are a number of possibilities which present themselves as offering interesting possibilities. Initially one can make a distinction between those avenues which may be amenable to individual research activity, and those which appear to be best undertaken as some form of collaborative undertaking.

In terms of individual research one impression I acquired from the literature is that there is perhaps too much focus upon managerial ethics. While the concern to enquire into the ethical beliefs of managers is clearly important given their traditional role within the business organisation, contemporary developments in organisational design suggest that there is also a need to research the ethical beliefs of non-managerial personnel as well. The contemporary importance given to the "flat", non-hierarchical, or network organisation suggest that it will be increasingly important to consider the ethical thoughts and practices of other occupational groupings as they become increasingly important for the well-being of the business organisation. If, as some writers contend, corporate strategy comes to be formulated not by senior management but by who Morgan (1993:41) refers to as "strategic termites", those who are lower down the organisational hierarchy and closer to the customer, their thoughts and beliefs become increasingly important. In any event, it is a colossal arrogance to presume that managers' beliefs are inherently of more interest and more important than those of other employees.

How one might best undertake such research also provides opportunities to explore other methods of both gathering information and improving upon its accuracy and legitimacy. Schein's clinical interview technique would seem to offer some opportunity for progressively uncovering the respondents' beliefs, although there would always be some doubt as to how accurately they could be represented by the researcher.

Another area of research which would appear to be currently missing, perhaps because of its sensitivity, is research into the impact of corporate codes of ethics and conduct upon those individuals who are recipients of the code. There does not appear to be qualitative research designed to uncover how such codes are perceived and interpreted by those who are intended to be influenced by its content and design. In this respect, such

activity might also provide a means of developing stronger links between business ethics research and that concerned with exploring the processes and mechanisms of culture management. While both the literatures relating to business ethics and organisational culture make reference to each other, there appears to be little academic literature which seeks to develop a closer relationship between the two areas of academic research and business practice.

While the above examples may be undertaken by individual researchers, there are other areas of concern which, while not impossible for the individual researcher, are perhaps more amenable to some form of collaborative research activity.

Two broad areas of research activity became of increasing personal interest as my work progressed. Firstly, there is the question of ethics and gender, the contrasting by feminist writers of the ethics of justice with an ethics of care. In terms of challenging the taken-for-granted assumptions of business ethicists I believe that feminist ethics expresses not simply the inherent male-bias within the subject, but equally importantly provides an important expression of the self-doubt inherent within Reflexive Modernity. Whether such research is undertaken at the level of the individual respondent, or at the meta-theoretical level of academic discourse, I think that this area of research activity will be of increasing importance in coming years. Similarly, and not simply because of the contemporary interest shown by some British politicians in the concept, I think that stakeholder theory, related to business ethics, provides another area of increasing relevance and importance. By challenging both the assumptions of profit maximisation, and also the traditional rational model of organisational decision making, stakeholder theory may provide an important means of exploring the complex nature of organisational ethics, how they are formulated and expressed, and how issues of ethical conflict are dealt with.

The most important expression of personal learning arising from this work has been to locate business ethics as an expression of the social production of knowledge and practice within a theoretical context which seeks to reflect both a concern for the nature of the individual with a concern to question the role of the free market economy within contemporary society (Hutton, 1997). It is in this respect that I believe that Durkheim's concept of anomie provides a link between political economy and the individual's experience of social life and conceptualisation of self-identity. Durkheim's concern to challenge the assumptions of Enlightenment thought, and the desire to emphasize the importance of emotion and feeling for the individual appears to embody much of the concern expressed by contemporary writers on Reflexive modernity. Durkheim's particular contribution is to both emphasize the importance of the free market economic system, without resorting to calls for its overthrow and replacement by another mode of economic activity. In an period which has seen such ostensible supporters of free market enterprise as George Soros (1997) question the role and influence of the

free market upon contemporary society, Durkheim's writings have a relevance which merits acknowledgement.

In providing a holistic analysis of early twentieth century French society Durkheim provides a powerful critique of the process of industrialisation and both the unforeseen and unintended effects of an over-emphasis upon the free market economic system. Today, as we contemplate the transition to a Global Information Society powered by the medium of both information technology and the free market system, it becomes even more necessary to question the supposed benefits which will result. Business ethics, perceived as both an expression of, and reaction to contemporary anomie, provides a potentially powerful medium for questioning both the role and effects of the free market system for the individual, the business organisation, and society. It is in this respect that I believe that business ethics, as a medium for the expression of concern regarding the role of the free market system within contemporary society, has a potentially radical role to play in facilitating a debate regarding what kind of society we wish to live in. It is axiomatic to say that such a process will be neither straightforward nor uncontested, but it is just such a process that I believe requires to be both observed and analyzed. Whether such a task can be undertaken by one individual I personally doubt. I believe that such an undertaking would be best accomplished through a process of collaborative research and discussion. It is however, an activity which would be of both academic and personal interest.

## Notes

1. One, perhaps symbolic, expression of such uncertainty can be found in the debates regarding how best to categorise the nature of contemporary Western society: Post-Industrial; Post-Fordist; Postmodern; Information Society; Reflexive Modernity (See for example, Kumar (1995). The very plethora of titles might be taken as an expression of anomie - an uncertainty regarding what the appropriate societal "label" should be.

2. Examples here might include the prospects of: home-working, the virtual organisation, the cashless economy through the development of electronic funds transfer, home-shopping via the internet (See e.g. Tapscott, 1996).

3. Within the realms of business practice two examples appear to symbolise such a situation. Firstly, the changing approaches to understanding the corporate strategy-making process (See e.g. Whittington, 1993; Stacey, 1993). Secondly, the multitude of books and articles dealing with corporate culture - and how to "manage" it. In a similar vein, the metamorphosis of Personnel Management to Human Resource Management appears to reflect the desire to both

acknowledge the complexity of the individual - but simultaneously harness him or her for the benefit of the organisation.

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