

2000

## Organisational Culture Receptiveness to Excellent Communication

Katherine Jane O'Donoghue  
*Edith Cowan University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses\\_hons](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons)



Part of the [Business and Corporate Communications Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

O'Donoghue, K. J. (2000). *Organisational Culture Receptiveness to Excellent Communication*. Edith Cowan University. [https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses\\_hons/871](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/871)

This Thesis is posted at Research Online.  
[https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses\\_hons/871](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/871)

# Edith Cowan University

## Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.
- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement.
- A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

ORGANISATIONAL  
CULTURE  
RECEPTIVENESS  
TO  
“EXCELLENT”  
COMMUNICATION

Katherine Jane O'Donoghue  
Faculty of Health and Science  
School of Communications and Multimedia  
Honours Thesis

## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

---

A major finding of the Grunig Excellence Study was that various dimensions of organisational culture play an important role in determining an organisations ability to practice excellent communication. This research has tested the dimensions of organisational culture as found in the Excellence Study in a new setting – the West Australian government through the Education Department of Western Australia. This will begin to determine their existence and relevance of the original findings outside the original study setting.

The study has a sample size of 450 employees of the Department Level 8 and below and 9 employees Level 9 and above in their Central Office. One questionnaire was distributed to all employees "The Employee Questionnaire" and a separate questionnaire was distributed to top management of Level 9 and above "Top Management Questionnaire". The focus of these instruments was primarily to examine organisational culture.

This study has tested the original findings, and provided evidence that many of the original findings surrounding organisational culture are present in this setting. This is exciting news for the original Excellence Study authors as it leaves room for the expansion of the relevance of the theory from its original setting to Australia, and potential for future testing.

Evidence has also been found that the 'mixed motive' model of public relations may be present in this study setting. This is also an interesting finding as this model has not been well tested or researched in any setting.

A review of the literature found that the Australian Public Service in general, and the Education Department of Western Australia more specifically, do not have entirely positive perceptions within the wider publics. Through analysing the internal organisational culture, it was found that several reasons for these potentially negative perceptions could be due to minimal levels of two-way symmetrical communication, participative management and collective decision making.

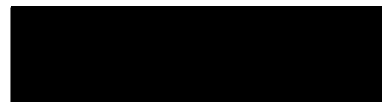
---

A positive finding for the Education Department of Western Australia was that the organisational culture was highly receptive to both culture and gender diversity.

---

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief :

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made to the text ; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.



---

A big thank you to all those who helped me along the way –  
especially Frank and Lelia.

Thank you to all those at EDWA who participated in this research.

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Use of Thesis	i
	Abstract	ii
	Declaration	iv
	Acknowledgments	v
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1-5</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
	The Excellence Study	6-11
	APS Culture and Perceptions	12-17
	Research To Date	18-20
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>RESEARCH PROBLEM &amp; EXPECTED FINDINGS</b>	
	The Research Problem	21
	The Research Questions	21
	Theoretical Framework	22
	Expected Findings	23
	The Media Perspective	24
	The Public Sector Perspective	26
	The EDWA Perspective	27
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>QUANTITATIVE DESIGN &amp; DATA ANALYSIS</b>	
	Research Design	29
	Limitations of Sampling and Distribution	32
	Questionnaire Design	34
	Limitations of Methodology	35
	Data Screening	37
	Factor Analysis	39
	Preliminary Demographic Descriptives	40
	<i>Analysis of Section I :</i>	
	<i>Symmetrical vs. Asymmetrical Communication</i>	
	Descriptive Statistics	42
	Correlational Statistics	44
	<i>Analysis of Section II A :</i>	
	<i>Mechanical vs. Organic Structure</i>	
	Correlational Statistics	46
	<i>Analysis of Section II B :</i>	
	<i>Authoritative vs. Participative Indicators</i>	
	Factor Analysis	47
	Analysis of the 19 Concepts	49
	Descriptive Analysis : Authoritative	51
	Descriptive Analysis : Participative	52
	Correlational Statistics	52
	<i>Analysis of Section III :</i>	
	<i>Individual vs. Departmental Job Satisfaction</i>	
	Factor Analysis	54
	Descriptive Analysis	54
	Correlational Analysis	55

---

---

	<i>Analysis of Section IV</i>	
	<i>Cultural and Gender Diversity</i>	56
	Dominant Coalition Analysis	57
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>59-62</b>
	<b>APPENDIX 1</b>	<b>63</b>
	<b>APPENDIX 2</b>	<b>64</b>
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>65-66</b>

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Communicating is important to governments (Maarek, 1995, x). It is not an "...exteric, abstract subject. It is critically important to the quality of our democracy. Like money in a market, government information [communication] functions as a principal currency in our political system." (Marsh, 1997, 96).

As the 'principal currency' of the Western political system, it would seem critical to good government that, like money in an economy or market, communication should be managed excellently. This research has been stimulated through an interest in how governments and their departments supply, manage and indeed value communication as a resource. The purpose of this study, however, has been narrowed to concentrate upon how communication is utilised as a resource in one Western Australian state government department.

According to Hill (1993), most government department communication is supplied in the form commonly defined as 'government information'. Hill (1993) claims that this dissemination technique has minimal similarity to excellent communication and that, in fact, it is largely a form of sociotherapy and tokenism designed to disguise the retreat of the real locus of power.

Wilson (1989) cites that the utilisation of the communication resource in this manner has resulted in the public ethos that government departments are "...lethargic, incompetent hacks...going to great lengths to avoid doing the job they were hired to do. Their...[departments]...chiefly produce waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement." (Wilson , 1989, x). Davis (1993) also

communicates this expectation, stating that publics generally perceive a government department as a "...bureaucratic monstrosity, an impersonal machine which follows its own logics and over which they have no control." (Davis, 1993, 18).

It could be said that the above views are one-sided and skewed. It is, however, arguable from a public relations perspective, that better communication by governments with their respective publics would facilitate better trust of departments and their decisions. In fact, better communication could bring the public service closer to the publics it represents and serves and to being "...one of the great institutions of our national life" (Keating, 1993, 2).

A reflection of the way Australian government departments manage their internal, rather than external, communication can be seen through the findings of the 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey. It

"...indicated that employees in the public service felt disempowered by the highly protected and regulated environment, and there was a lack of trust of management. While formal consultative processes were twice as likely to be in place than in the private sector, public servants did not feel able to make decisions for themselves at the workplace level" (Kemp, 1998, 5).

These findings indicate an authoritative system with little legitimate two-way communication (Kemp, 1998). It could be said, therefore, that there remains room for investigation and improvement in both internal and external communication management, in order to facilitate optimum performance

(Kemp, 1998). Such exploratory investigation is the first purpose of this research paper.

One avenue this can be explored through lies within the public relations field. As a growing field throughout communication and business schools and the business world (Dozier, 1995), public relations theory will be a valuable tool in evaluating how governments supply, manage and value communication.

A specific theory of public relations which can examine communications management is the Grunig Excellence Study. This has proven a major component of theory in the development of public relations as a valid and recognised body of knowledge (Dozier, 1995). The theory has proven reliable through many organisations and nations – primarily the United States of America - however, it has not been thoroughly tested in Australia. This research has therefore presented the opportunity for an established theory to be tested in a new environment, and this is the second purpose of this research.

It is of interest to eventually look at communication management in the Western Australian State Government as a whole. For the purposes of this honours research, and in consideration of time and budgetary constraints, it has proven viable to focus on one department as a starting point for analysis - the Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA).

In light of recent changes to the education system, such as the proposed new education bill (EDWA website), pressure in school downsizing and various internal changes which will be mentioned later in this chapter, it has proven very interesting to examine the communication culture of EDWA.

EDWA employs around 1365 people in both its district and central offices.

“The Department is responsible for the education of more than 250 000 students at a total of more than 768 schools spread from Kalumburu in the north to Albany in the south and from Cocos-Keeling Islands in the west to Wingellina on the edge of the Great Victorian Desert in the east.” (EDWA website).

It could be said that the Department, as with most government departments, is susceptible to unfavourable perceptions within the community. The stigma of the public service branches as “...asylums for the indolent or incompetent...” (Shergold, 1997, 32) remains evident within much political commentary and media. EDWA, however, has begun putting footholds in place to escape from some of these ‘guilty by association’ charges.

EDWA has been planning for, and beginning to implement, a documented Communication Program. It is also undergoing research in the area of change management. It is, therefore, the third purpose of this research to provide research results to the department and to assist in its intention to increase receptiveness to new communication strategies and to increase public accountability.

This research will replicate an investigation of the Grunig Excellence Study into communications management. Data obtained will provide descriptive analysis of the characteristics of the communication culture within EDWA and offer insight as to whether the findings of the original study are applicable.

Data obtained from this study will not be generalisable between departments. However, it will hopefully allow for an indication of the state of communication management within EDWA as a Western Australian government department. This research will extend current public relations theory through testing the Excellence Study in a new environment and provide valuable information to EDWA in its own studies on communication and change management.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The Excellence Study  
APS Culture and Perceptions  
Research To Date

CHATHAM  
HOSPITAL

"There is nothing so practical as a good theory", is the old adage originating from Kurt Lewin and cited by Vocate (1997). The public relations discipline is no stranger to this line of thought. According to Neff (1997), the nature and complexity of public relations has evolved "... from a simplistic orientation stressing the production of publicity into a more sophisticated processural orientation that emphasizes the role of communication in allowing organisations and publics interact" (Neff, 1997, 159). This increased complexity and framework for communication strategies (Vocate, 1997) has resulted from continual development and testing of the theories surrounding the discipline.

### **THE EXCELLENCE STUDY**

One such theory renowned for its positive additions to the practice and education of public relations is the Excellence Study (Dozier et al, 1995). This study, according to Dozier et al (1995) is considered the first major body of public relations theory. It is "...the largest, most intensive investigation ever conducted of public relations and communications management" (Dozier et al, 1995, 3). It is this theory which underpins the research reported here.

The Excellence Study, as a major body of public relations theory (Dozier et al, 1995) represents professional growth for the discipline. Especially since the machinations of practice are more easily understood and explained when theoretical footholds are in place (Vocate, 1997).

Prior to the Excellence Study, much communication and public relations research was confined to 'case study' boundaries (Dozier et al, 1995, 239) which have been labeled as typically resembling "...war stories rather than rigorous scholarship..." (Dozier et al, 1995, 239). The Excellence Study paved a path forward to break through some of these boundaries.

The study was conducted in two stages. The first stage in 1990/1991 surveyed "...about 300 organizations, CEO's, top communicators and a sampling of regular employees..." (Dozier et al, 1995, 238). Of the 300 organisations, there were 200 from the United States of America, 50 from the United Kingdom and 50 from Canada (Dozier et al, 1995). Corporations, not-for profits, government agencies and associations were included. The second stage in 1994 involved case studies of "...about 2 dozen organisations selected from those originally surveyed, [and] researchers conducted nearly 100 hours of interviews with communicators and members of dominant coalitions, fleshing out survey findings." (Dozier et al, 1995, 238).

During the first survey stage in 1990/1991 three separate questionnaires were used. The first was formulated for what was named the 'dominant coalition'. This involved senior managers who played an influential role within the organisation with respect to hierarchy and organisational power. The second questionnaire was designed to survey the top communicators (or heads of public relations departments). The third questionnaire in this first stage was developed for all other employees of the organisation.

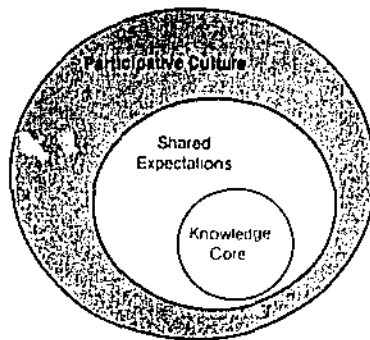
The initial data reports produced nine key findings surrounding organisational culture and communication management (IABC, 1992). These were;

1. "Top communicator serves as a senior advisor to management
2. Top communicator is a strategic manager
3. Top communicator plays the managerial role.
4. Top communicator enjoys support of the dominant coalition (key decision makers)
5. Two-way symmetrical (or balanced) model: creates win-win solutions
6. Two-way asymmetrical (top down) model: lacks win-win advantage
7. A participative culture inspires excellence
8. CEO and top communicator report strong support for women
9. Marketing and public relations functions should be separate" (IABC, 1992, 7-9)

These characteristics were then clustered into three main areas;

1. Knowledge base of the communication department
2. Shared expectations about communication with senior management, and;
3. Organisational culture (Dozier et al, 1995).

These have been graphically depicted as the 'three spheres' of communication excellence:



(Dozier et al, 1995, p10 Adapted from Fig 1.1)

The outer sphere is of particular interest to this research. The outer sphere of communication excellence, within which the inner and middle spheres lie, was entitled 'organisational' or 'participative' culture. According to the IABC report (1992) this sphere relates to one of the major findings of the Excellence Study. It is that the "...thousands of values possible in organizations actually cluster into two basic sets of values. These two basic cultures are called authoritarian and participative. All organizations have elements of both cultures. However, one culture is likely to be more dominant." (IABC, 1992, 8). The dominant culture will heavily influence the internal and external communication directives of the organisation.

The two major findings of this sphere were that the cultures which inspire excellence were; (1) participative, and (2) encouraged gender and cultural diversity (Dozier et al, 1995).

## **1. Participative Cultures**

The IABC (1992) states that participative cultures provide a supportive environment for excellent internal and external communication. This is an environment in which goals are common and individuals are working together, as opposed to authoritarian cultures where there is centralised control and authority (Dozier et al, 1995).

According to the IABC initial data report on the Excellence Study (1991), organisations with participative cultures will emphasize and experience shared elements including collective responsibility, decision making and values, managers with holistic concerns, longer-term employment, liberal values, open systems, advancement based on employees' performance, shared mission and the valuing of innovation.

Conversely, organisations with authoritarian cultures emphasize individual values and responsibility, managers express little concern for the lives of the employees outside the organization, separate personal and organisational goals, advancement based on who you know rather than performance, a tendency towards tradition, conservative values, shorter-term employment as employees frequently move from organisation to organisation, and closed systems (Dozier et al, 1995).

The IABC's initial data report (1991) offers 19 parameters for analysing organisational culture. These are:

1. "Collective vs. individual responsibility
2. Collective vs. individual decision making
3. Collective vs. individual values
4. Holistic concern vs. lack of such concern for people
5. Long-term vs. short-term employment
6. Slow vs. fast evaluation and promotion
7. Non-specialized vs. specialized career paths
8. Shared mission
9. Rewards for performance rather than personal connections
10. Social atmosphere among employees and managers off the job
11. Integration vs. individualism
12. Emphasis on time
13. Decision making by tradition, rational process, open debate, trial and error, scientific research, or authority
14. Consensual processes
15. Importance of innovation, tradition and efficiency as organizational values
16. Authoritarian vs. participative management style
17. Liberal vs. conservative values
18. Cooperation vs. domination in relationships with publics [and]
19. System open vs. closed to its environment" (IABC, 1991, 39-43)

These nineteen concepts are of particular relevance to this report and are analysed in the quantitative questionnaire developed as a part of the Excellence Study for employees of the organisation.

## **2. Gender and Cultural Diversity**

The second area of organisational culture mentioned previously involves the capacity of organisations to provide mechanisms to facilitate a gender and culturally-diverse empowered workforce. This includes the ability of organisations to help women and cultural minorities gain access to managerial positions (IABC, 1992). Such mechanisms also reflect the value systems of the organisation, and its ability to communicate with a wide and diverse range of internal and external publics (Dozier et al, 1995).

### **THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE (APS)**

The significance of organisational culture to the APS is timely. The APS, at both Federal and State levels' is still typically labeled unresponsive and unreceptive to the publics it supposedly represents and serves (Oliver, 1993; Graham, 1995). According to Lindblom (1993) the public service leaves much room for improvement of its public image.

Mazis (1997) suggests that the reasons for such a public image revolve around the increased diversity of the challenges facing the government sector in recent

years. The APS environment, as with any nation's bureaucracy, now includes issues not only involving government, but society at large (Mazis, 1997).

The introduction of society as a variable has evolved from many factors. Some of these include changing societal needs for information dissemination, increased media power and influence, increased power of pressure groups, increased importance of communication networks and structures, new horizons in political power and an increased focus on accountability, responsiveness and ethics (Allen-German, 1977; Mazis, 1997).

Throughout history, different societies have demanded changes in information supplied by their governments. A recognisable point of analysis, discussed by Singer (1996), begins with the end of World War II. Controls on the media, nationalisation of services and the existence of propaganda machines during the war years were common, and accepted in government. Times of crisis, such as this, in many ways fostered public acceptance of these authoritative measures as patriotic and essential (Singer, 1996). Post war, much of the bureaucratic infrastructure remained and was accepted in peace largely because the public was resigned to an intrusive, interventionist and authoritative system of government (Singer, 1996).

Times have changed! Public faith and patriotism towards governments, their departments and adopted policies have been replaced by a greater emphasis upon individual responsibility and accountability (Kelly, 1993). It could be said that governments have adapted in order to meet the terms of these changing

societal demands, but not yet far enough. The elements of participative culture, as identified in the Excellence Study, are not yet embedded enough within government to cope with the demands of this 'new society' (Oliver, 1993; Button, 1993).

Allen German (1977) offers an early glimpse at a picture of this 'new' society, which he believes represents an increasingly insecure future for all. He stresses the importance of recognising that the political scene is now well within the awareness of every person through the mass media. This flow of information and ease of communication, "...makes it very difficult for anyone with even a modicum of intelligence to bury his [her] head in the sand, under the bedclothes or in his [her] beer mug." (Allen German, 1977, 31).

Individuals, both within the wider public and as government employees, can no longer be perceived and treated as inanimate objects with universal and separable traits (Allen German, 1977). Self-awareness in the public has resulted in an increased attachment of meaning to surroundings and events (Crowley, 1987) therefore, increasing the need for internal and external participative characteristics in government.

Kelly (1993) illustrates that although the modern-day political arena is aware of what society is thinking, government bureaucracies are unsure of how to respond in an appropriate and meaningful way. This has left a degree of instability and dissatisfaction with governments, and government departments.

The electorate, however, "...still believes in hope. It wants things to be better and wants institutions and leaders to perform." (Kelly, 1993, 156).

Political power over government is no longer captive to those directly involved in government processes. As Johnson (1997) states in his analysis of the writings of Michael Foucault, no one is 'outside' the power spectrum. Political power or involvement/influence is a factor which can not be legitimately denied of any individual adult within a democratic society (Johnson, 1997). It is therefore increasingly important that government organisations recognise and adapt appropriately to communicate excellently with all relevant internal and external publics

The existence and expansion of this political power has been largely attributed by Johnson (1997) to the mechanics of mass communication. This process takes shape in many forms and excludes no one. Johnson (1997) identifies political communication as a coordinating and nourishing tool which links social and political relations. In the present age of Freedom of Information Acts, privatisation, contracting out and managerialism, it is important the Australian government recognise the need for greater use of communication to develop win-win strategies with all relevant internal and external publics.

The media has increased its penetration and power to influence the political scene by making information other than that supplied by governments readily accessible to a wide variety of publics (Maarek, 1995). Further, the proliferation and dramatisation of information has made it almost impossible for even the

most informed to keep up with the dynamics of the political environment (Allen German, 1977). Maarek (1995) concludes that a political organisation can no longer rely on the "... literary quality of political discourse and the rhetorical brio of its orators" (Maarek, 1995, 1) to be appreciated by the electorate and the media. Instead, a political organisation has to engage with the arguments and win hearts and minds.

Internal and external publics' responses to political processes, at all levels of government and governmental departments, have changed from acceptance, to scrutiny (Kelly, 1993). Changing domestic and world environments have resulted in mass instability and a lack of security. Individuals no longer merely accept change, instead they demand to understand it (Allen German, 1977).

Today's political and social environments have forced individuals to test both their self-awareness and interpretation and understanding of others' motives (Crowley, 1987). Crowley (1987) speaks of a the emergence of a critical autonomy, encouraging individuals to challenge and contest arguments, standards, decisions and the methods used to arrive at them.

The above arguments indicate that today's information environment has disseminated power among many diverse publics (Maarek, 1995). This has resulted in an increased demand for the accountability of those involved in political processes at domestic, national and international levels (Nivola, 1998).

This increased demand for accountability has necessitated the development of 'better practice' in government. Government decision-making, according to Excellence Theory (Dozier et al, 1995), now requires involvement and influence of all relevant target publics in order to satisfy the demands of all involved. According to Starr (1995), better communication is 'priority one', in order to ensure an adequate response to the demands for ethical practice and accountability.

Oliver (1993) believes that the demand for government accountability is not being met adequately. He puts forward this argument with the concept of an 'iron triangle' of government, involving the bureaucracy, industry and the executive. Oliver (1993) argues that there is little room for public accountability and participative organisational cultures within this triangle. Button (1993) agrees with the 'iron triangle' concept, and states that governments are typically 'out of touch' with the increasingly diffuse range of interest groups which make up a society.

Oliver (1993) encourages governments to embrace participative organisational policies and to look outside this 'iron triangle'. This is because he believes it is important to realise the need to abstain from simply "...tinkering with the old system..." (Oliver, 1993, 135) in attempt to meet new realities. Instead it is important to look at new theory and develop new processes to provide a new system current with the times and demands of society.

## **RESEARCH TO DATE**

Dr Ian Marsh, of the Australian Graduate School of Management (as cited by Oliver, 1993) points to a distinct lack of research in terms of the development and accommodation of new processes in decision making and issue identification within the Australian political system.

Instead, the majority of research in communication and government focuses on the concept of 'selling' government ideas and government decisions (Maarek, 1995; McMahon, 1997; Starr, 1995; Graham, 1995; Kinnear, 1997; Mazis, 1997; Greyser, 1997; Bloom, 1997; Jones Marshall & Bergman, 1996). There is an obvious opportunity for further research in this area, and the public relations Excellence Study is an important theory with which communication research in government can begin.

Simonsen et al (1996) and Culbertson and Chen (1992) point to such an expansion of the research agenda. They discuss the issue of governments gaining legitimacy in communication, rather than just engaging in the mere 'sale' of policies. There have been many ideas raised surrounding this idea of legitimacy, some of which can be referred to as 'participation and policy sharing' (Simonsen et al, 1996; Culbertson and Chen, 1992; Faulkes, 1993; Marsh, 1993; Steelman and Ascher, 1997).

The idea of participation in government obviously relies on the predisposition for a participative culture, one dimension researched in the Excellence Study.

The Excellence Study looks at participative tendencies in respect to the way internal communication is practiced, the way external communication is practised and how both these elements define the ability of an organisation to cultivate and employ participative techniques and - in government terms - policies.

Participation and policy sharing involve a highly active form of communication, including two-way processes and symmetry (Dozier et al, 1995). Studies into these areas hypothesise that active, participative and legitimate communication encourages decision and outcome acceptance.

The APS is accountable to the public. It can be hypothesised that imperative to its success and acceptance, therefore, is the need for it to develop and maintain accountability, and sound communication and public relations practices involving all relevant internal and external publics at all times.

This is by no means an easy task in government. However, in my opinion, the Excellence Study is a solid starting point in the development of sound communication. It looks at many of the variables necessary to maintain an accountable nature: two-way communication, participative management, empowerment, collective decision making, holistic concerns, consensual processes, decision making by rational process and open debate, innovation and open systems (Dozier et al, 1995).

Lindblom (1993) cites the most logical 'next question' as "*what stands in the way of improvement?*" It is this open question that is the motivation for this study.

It is now apparent that political (and indeed public-sector) problem solving can no longer be restricted to isolated ideologies. The Excellence Study can prove particular relevance here as it points to a model which can facilitate an organisation's desire to improve areas of a participative culture, and hence integrate internal and external publics into an open, rather than closed communication system.

# RESEARCH PROBLEM & EXPECTED FINDINGS

The Research Problem

The Research Questions

Theoretical Framework

Expected Findings

The Media Perspective

The Public Sector Perspective

The EDWA Perspective

U  
T  
A  
T  
M  
N  
T  
T  
N  
M

## **THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

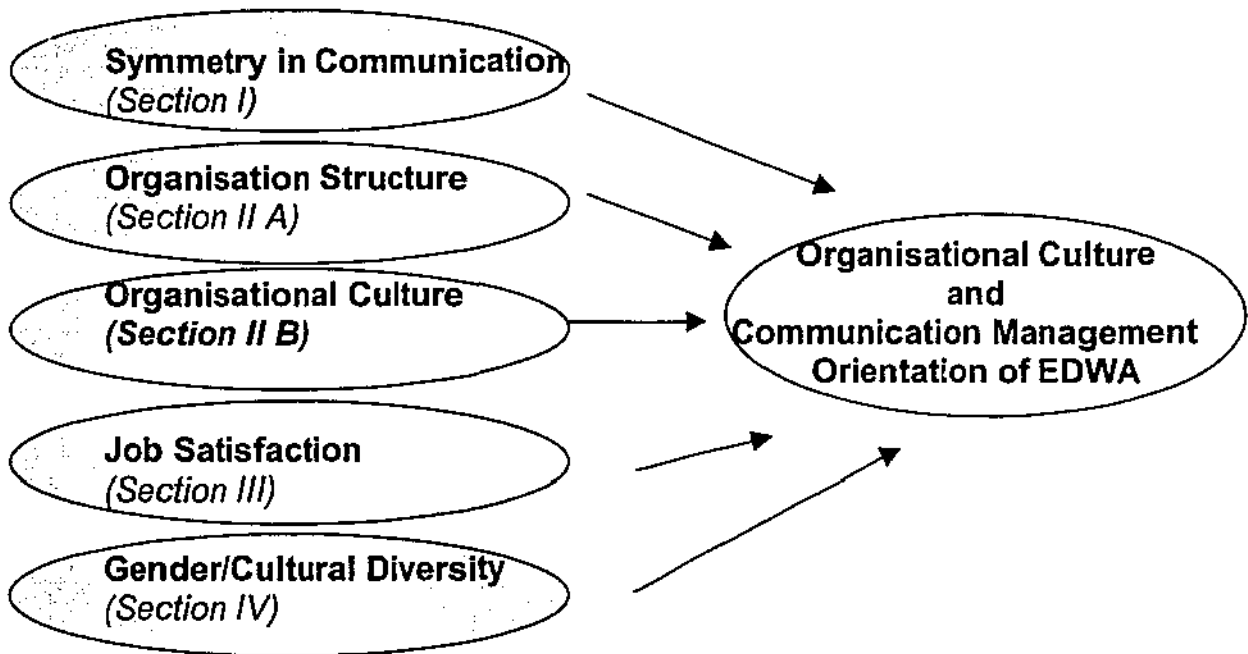
Investigating the relevance of public relations theory in a specific environment, and the findings of the Excellence Study, to organisational culture and communication management in EDWA.

## **THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- Do the Excellence organisational culture variables exist in this setting?
- What are the strengths of the variables in this setting to those found by Grunig?
- What are the relationships between the variables in this setting to Grunig's?
- Do the organisational culture variables factorise/cluster in a similar fashion?
- What are the differences and similarities between the findings in the original study setting and this study setting?

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following variables have been extracted from the IABC's Initial Data Report (1991). These are the variables which relate specifically to the quantitative tool used in this study.



## **EXPECTED FINDINGS**

Much of the literature previously discussed in this research presented the hypothesis that the public perception of the practice of the APS (and bureaucracies in general) is not exceptionally high. For the descriptive purposes of this research, and its constraints, I have not looked in detail at the literature regarding public perceptions of the education policy area or specifically EDWA. However, it is at this point feasible to draw some inferences from several sources that appear to comment upon communication management and organisational culture within EDWA.

### **THE EDWA PERSPECTIVE : PARTICIPATIVE CULTURE**

Referring to EDWA literature paints a fairly optimistic impression of the variables listed in the theoretical framework above. The latest annual report accessible to review at this time - the 1995/1996 report - states that EDWA is in fact committed to "...participative decision making...[and]...open communication and two way accountability." (EDWA, 1997, 8&9).

Several EDWA publications on their website refer to this commitment.

Literature published with EDWA authorship reflects an understanding of Allen-German's (1977) portrayal of changing societal needs outlined in Chapter 2. Cheryl Vardon, Director-General of Education (1998) states that in their policy making, EDWA has "...allowed for the reality that the Australian community is

better informed today than ever before...[and that]...people expect to be involved..." (EDWA website).

The Department also acknowledges that, "One of the hardest things to do is listening to the stories of those affected...Often we say we listen and we engage in certain activities that we call evaluation. But in the end we don't listen - we say we know the best and go ahead regardless with resulting conflict." (EDWA website). This understanding of the importance of the legitimacy of communication (Chen and Culbertson, 1992) would appear to indicate a propensity for, or an acknowledgement of the importance of, participative decision making and management within the Department.

EDWA has begun to author and employ a departmental 'Communication Strategy'. This is currently in draft (EDWA website) and although it could pave the way to an excellent communication culture, as with most organisations, there will always be room for improvement. The findings of this study are intended to point out possible avenues for improvement.

### **THE MEDIA PERSPECTIVE : PARTICIPATIVE CULTURE**

This room for improvement can begin to be analysed through viewing one edition of the *Sunday Times*. Scanning this one edition uncovered four separate articles published involving EDWA. These articles are included in Appendix 2.

Each of these articles implied negative connotations of the Department as the angle of their stories. The worst being headlined in 'F for Fail in School Disputes' (Editorial, 1999, 14), with the 'F' referring to the EDWA. The four articles were found in the first quarter of the newspaper, with the largest spanning half a page, including a photograph, and the smallest being two paragraphs long.

In the four articles, the media paints a picture of EDWA as authoritative and implies negative consequences of this. The Editorial states that EDWA had been "...absurd [and]...unacceptable..." in its decision making procedures (Editorial, 1999, 14). It could be said that this contrasts with the views of the Department as outlined above.

The next two articles regarding the EDWA refer to situations in which the Department's decision making process is publicly accountable. One article refers to a dispute involving a regional school principal's concern about a decision passed and the second to a parent's dispute with a Departmental decision passed.

In my opinion, both articles portray the individual's requests of the Department to be reasonable and viable. They also portray the decision making process of the Department to be towards the closed, authoritative and traditional end of the scale. In the first instance, the reporter brings it to the reader's attention

that the Public Sector Standards Commission had been investigating the justification behind the decision made.

Although it is very noteworthy that the media can be biased and not always reflective of the entire story, the articles appear indicative of an organisational culture fostering decision making by authority and non-consensual processes (IABC, 1991). These characteristics are not those of a communicationally excellent organisation.

The final article made reference to an administrative blunder on behalf of EDWA. While this was the smallest of the four articles, the journalist has taken the opportunity to portray the department as a largely incompetent body at even administrative tasks such as payroll.

### **THE PUBLIC SECTOR PERSPECTIVE : PARTICIPATIVE CULTURE**

A second area which may indicate authoritative rather than participative variables existing within EDWA comes from research by Watkins (1992) who cites the Australian education sector, in general, as persisting with 'traditional and authoritarian' approaches.

Watkins (1992) points to the findings by Chen and Culbertson (1992) and Simonsen (1996), indicating an apparent lack of 'legitimacy' in participative policies communicated and employed in the past, within the Australian

education sector. "This contradiction would seem to imply a bifurcation in the administration of education where, at the local level, principals, teachers, parents and students have to adjust to the immediate concerns of greater involvement in participation; yet, in the administrative offices, there is still central control of finance and resources" (Watkins, 1992, 239). This displays the rhetoric of an outwardly participative organisation or sector, operating what could be, on closer analysis, an inwardly authoritative and closed system.

Watkins (1992) indicates that forums indicative of a participative and open system, have become an avenue to communicate at rather than with relevant publics, hence, falling below their apparent goals. He argues that the education sector as a whole has moved from that of a "...hegemony of consent to a hegemony of coercion" (Watkins, 1992, 257).

### **THE EDWA PERSPECTIVE : CULTURAL & GENDER DIVERSITY**

Inferences regarding the second organisational culture factor 'gender empowerment and cultural diversity' will in this research, because of time, monetary and Departmental constraints, be hypothesised from articles published by EDWA in their web site.

As part of EDWA's 'Strategic Plan 1996-1998', the Department has enacted specific policies to "...improve the equity of representation of subgroups..." (EDWA home page). In this action statement, it has specifically included the

implementation of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) strategies in order to achieve equitable representation of women and Aboriginal people in management positions across their schools, district and central offices.

In order to maintain this perspective, EDWA has highlighted their intention to hold all staff accountable to the adherence of EEO principles through their performance management system (EDWA web site). EDWA has also recommended the implementation of reviews in staff management policies to remove discriminatory provisions, to create a welcome working environment in order to retain culturally diverse employees and to, ultimately, increase the number of Aboriginal employees in the work-force to 3% of Department staff by December, 2000 (EDWA web site).

Anticipated responses aside, however, this study interrogates the hypotheses and research questions outlined earlier. The next chapter deals with the research design.

# QUANTITATIVE DESIGN & DATA ANALYSIS

Research Design  
Limitations of Sampling  
Questionnaire Design  
Limitations of Methodology  
Data Screening  
Factor Analysis  
Demographic Descriptives  
Data Analysis

U  
T  
A  
H  
M  
U  
C  
O  
T  
A

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This research was designed as a descriptive study. It used a pre-established quantitative tool for analysis and, therefore, no operationalisation of concepts was performed. The study was not intended to interfere with the 'natural flow of events' (Sekaran, 1992). Interference within the EDWA and its operational systems was minimal with the primary mode of research conducted being electronically-distributed quantitative questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed in this manner at the request of the Department. At a further request of the Department, no qualitative interviews were conducted.

The manipulation of variables to establish a cause and effect relationship was not possible. This was due to the fact that their presence (and their correlational relationship) had not yet been solidly proven in the Australian political environment. The type of investigation undertaken is therefore correlational rather than causal. Analysis of the variables in the following data will be of a descriptive and correlational nature.

The study was conducted in a non-contrived setting, as a field study. Each individual response was treated as an individual data source. The unit of analysis to follow was 'the individual'. Employee perceptions of the communication culture of EDWA was thus individual to the respondent and not analysed from a relationship or group perspective. All group data analysis was performed at a departmental level, maintaining individuals within the department as one unit, with the department as the group unit of analysis (Sekaran, 1992).

Due to time limitations of this research, the time horizon is cross-sectional. Data was collected once, with a second round of questionnaires distributed for the sole purpose of calculating non-response bias. The second round of questionnaires distributed resulted in a sample size of eight, with three being 'lost' due to email/cyberspace intricacies. Due to this limitation therefore the calculation of non-response bias was eliminated and the five responses obtained were added to the primary data set.

The population of this study involved every individual employed by the EDWA. The EDWA has 16 District Offices with 944 employees. There is one Central Office which employs 651 people. The total number of employees is 1365.

The population frame involved all employees of the EDWA, including casual and part-time employees, trainees and tea attendants, Public Service Level 1 through Public Service Level 9 Class 1, 2 and 3 employees.

Not all elements within the population frame were included in this study. At the request of the EDWA, only the Central Office was included. It was decided by the EDWA that surveying the Central Office was sufficiently representative of the population frame in terms of the research problem.

For the analysis of the research problem, it was desirable that the sampling method be a probability sampling. This enabled comparative statistics between this study and the original study, and also provided for reliable statistical analysis. A stratified random sampling method was employed. The sample

was stratified according to data on the internal EDWA's computer system. This data was supplied jointly through the Human Resources and Information Technology sections - it stratified the sample in terms of employment level.

Two questionnaires were used - one for senior management (Level 9 employees and above) and a second for all other employees (Level 8 and below). Respondents were stratified on this basis at the request of the EDWA. The sampling method was considered proportionate as 100 per cent of employees at each level were issued with the questionnaire.

### **LIMITATIONS OF SAMPLING AND DISTRIBUTION TECHNIQUE**

One major restriction on the sample size was the fact that the instrument was, at the request of the EDWA, issued via internal email. This was also one reason for the insistence that only Central Office employees be part of the sample, as it would be difficult to gauge the email access of district offices.

Although the internal email system was used, not all employees of the Department have access to email and computer systems. Some employees are casual and part time and do not necessarily have email accounts. There are a number of names which appear on the internal email address list of employees who are no longer employed by EDWA - resulting in the effective distribution of 'dead' questionnaires.

With all of these factors taken into consideration, it was estimated (in conjunction with Human Resources and Information Technology officers at EDWA) that the questionnaire would have been accessible to no more than 450 to 500 Central Office employees.

A further point raised by the Information Technology officer was the negative aspect of the sample being issued with an email which was addressed to 'All Staff'. The point was raised that the majority of staff disregard such messages immediately without ascertaining their content. However, the sample size was decided at 450 employees with no casual, part time or trainee employees included in the sample size.

It was hoped that precision of the data obtained would be increased through allowance for non-response bias. However, the main evidence for precision is now that the population sample is sufficiently representative of the population frame. The sample, of 450 employees is sufficient in size and strata to ensure maximum precision. The questionnaire is attached in Appendix 1.

Blank responses in the quantitative questionnaire were replaced by the mean score for that question. Items were coded according to question number. The questions surrounding the individual variables in the tool were already grouped, which facilitated easy data analysis on SPSS/PCstudentware.

Responses to the top management (Level 9 and above) questionnaire were not statistically analysed through SPSS as the sample size was not large enough to produce any reliable outputs. There were nine top management questionnaires distributed and two completed responses were returned. These questionnaires were analysed through manual comparison.

## **QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN**

It has been previously stated that this study used a previously established questionnaire. However, three minor alterations were made to these questionnaires. The first involved the issue of culturally-appropriate and situation-specific grammar. Throughout the questionnaire, the term 'organisation' was substituted by 'department' when referring to the entire EDWA Central Office. The term 'department', as used in the original questionnaire, was substituted for the term 'section' to identify different areas within the department itself.

The second change made to the instrument was a change of scale. The original questionnaires used the fractionation scale. The scale was changed to a five point Likert scale. There were two reasons for this alteration. The first reason was discovered after initial consultation with the EDWA. It was the preference of the Department that the scale be changed. It was thought that many employees may experience what Dozier (1995) identifies as an aversion to the scale and deem the questionnaire too difficult and as a consequence, not respond. The second reason involved ease of data collection and analysis. As a first time researcher, it was much easier to perform statistical analysis of a five-point Likert scale rather than a fractionation scale.

The final change made to the questionnaires is that they were reformatted for email distribution.

The content of the questions in both questionnaires was not changed. The employee (Level 8 and below) questionnaire consisted of 106 topical questions and 6 demographic questions. The senior management (Level 9 and above) questionnaire consisted of 89 topical questions and 6 demographic questions. (Questionnaires attached in Appendix 1)

### **LIMITATIONS OF METHODOLOGY**

There are several limitations to the methodology of this research. The first limitation involves the possible inaccuracy of the final sample size. Distribution of the questionnaires was done at a Departmental level and therefore careful monitoring of exact distribution numbers was not possible. It is acknowledged, however, that the best possible estimate has been made as to the correct sample size, with the assistance of Phillip North from the Information Technology section within EDWA.

A second limitation of the research is also linked to the electronic distribution of the questionnaires. Thirteen responses were received by email which could not be opened because of errors when trying to attach the document to return email. While each of these employees were contacted via email to inform them that their responses had not come through, three replied back again that they did not have time to fill in the questionnaire again and the remaining ten did not reply. Some valuable data was therefore lost during the data collection process.

A third limitation of the research involves the heavy reliance upon quantitative data. While the study is descriptive and its primary aim is to quantify the existence or non-existence of the variables and their strengths, the data collected may have been more easily explained with qualitative data to assist. The lack of qualitative research in this study was, as previously mentioned, at the request of EDWA. One reason for this was time-tabling limitations of the Department. Nonetheless, this data represents a valid assessment of communication practice and organisational culture in EDWA which can now be compared with the results from the Grunig Excellence Study.

## **DATA SCREENING**

From 450 employee questionnaires distributed by email, 65 were returned - 52 were usable and the remaining 13 were lost due to email problems. From 9 top management questionnaires distributed by email, 2 were returned.

The data collected was initialised before any in depth data analysis was performed. Negative questions were recoded so that all responses of '5: Strongly Agree' indicated what the study defines as participative culture and all responses of '1 Strongly Disagree' were indicative of what the study defines as an authoritative culture.

Univariate and multivariate tests for normality were performed. The univariate test used was the box plot method. Mahalanobis distance was used to determine multivariate outliers. Questions in the multivariate analysis were grouped according to a preliminary factor analysis of the data in conjunction with the factor analysis of the original data.

Some univariate outliers were detected through the box plot analysis. Based on the fact that there was a fixed scale used for the instrument, and that the sample size was quite small, it was decided against eliminating outlier respondents, instead they were replaced by the mean score for that variable. Outliers were evident in questions where only one or two respondents answered at either extreme of the five-point scale. Trials of eliminating these respondents left the next range of answer as the outlier and therefore, with

some questions, the process of elimination would have left very little data to analyse.

Multivariate outliers were analysed by using Mahalanobis distance. The  $\chi^2$  level of 0.05, with the relevant degrees of freedom, was used. According to Mahalanobis distance, multivariate outliers were evident in 6 of the 23 factors analysed. On closer analysis, it was clear that most of these outliers were accounted for by the univariate outliers already detected. While the presence of the outliers is acknowledged, as with the univariate outliers, they have not been extracted from the data for similar reasons. The outliers were not far enough from the data set to pose any potentially major problems to the following data analysis.

## **FACTOR ANALYSIS**

Factor analysis was performed for several reasons. The first reason was to see whether some of the individual variables exist in the study setting. The second reason was to compare factor loadings and cumulative variance with the factor findings of the original study.

Factor analysis was performed on Section I (Questions 1-10), Section II (Questions 11-19), and Section III (Questions 68-85). The factor analyses were rotated using varimax in order to maximise factor loadings.

Analysis from this point on has been divided into sections. Section I (as with the original study) indicates the organisation's tendency towards symmetry or asymmetry in its practice of communication. Section II A indicates if the organisation operates with a mechanic or organic structure. Section II B analyses the 19 individual variables surrounding authoritative and participative organisational cultures. The issue of individual versus departmental satisfaction with employment is analysed through Section III. Cultural and gender diversity and empowerment is analysed throughout Section IV.

### **PRELIMINARY DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIVES**

Two thirds of respondents to this questionnaire were male, and one third were female. 70.1% of respondents were aged between 35 and 54. 61.1% of respondents had been employed with the department for more than 10 years. The skew of the data indicating employment level showed that most respondents were Level 5 and above. 61.4% of respondents had either a Bachelor or Masters Degree.

**ANALYSIS OF SECTION I**  
**Questions 1-10**  
**Symmetrical vs. Asymmetrical Communication**

The factor analysis of Section I indicated some similar results to that of the original study. In the original study, questions 1, 8 and 10 indicated asymmetry and 2-7 and 9 indicated symmetry in communication. In this study, questions 1 and 10 were strongly loaded as one factor, indicating asymmetry. However, an interesting finding is that questions 2 through 9 factorised strongly with both of the factors extracted.

A possible explanation for these factor loadings is that the 'mixed motive' model of communication is evident in this environment. A mixed motive model of communication exists when both symmetry and asymmetry are present. The 'mixed motive' model of communication practice is a new area of public relations and, as yet, there is little research on the model. Asymmetrical and symmetrical communication appear to exist simultaneously in this setting. A correlational analysis of the two variables shows a very strongly relationship of  $r^2 = .7339$ . This positive and strong correlation indicates that as symmetry increases, so too does asymmetry. This, again, indicates a co-existence. The 'mixed motive' hypothesis is also supported by descriptive statistical analysis, to be discussed later in this section.

The two factors account for 56.43% in the variance, which is deemed acceptable for the purposes of this research. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for reliability of the scale of the questions involved in the two factors extracted. The reliability coefficient for Factor 1 was .7386 and .7545 for Factor 2. These

coefficients are both quite high which would seem to indicate the presence of the symmetry and asymmetry variables.

### **DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

The mean of questions 1, 8 and 10, as the questions indicating asymmetry, and 2-7 and 9, as the questions indicating symmetry, were calculated and saved as variables. These saved variables have been used to perform the descriptive and correlational analysis. This process has been executed in a similar fashion throughout the following sections of data analysis.

To continue with the discussion on the presence of the 'mixed motive' model, a very interesting finding can be identified in the descriptive statistics. Only one quarter of respondents indicated that communication in their department was two-way between management and employees. However just over half of respondents indicated that they did not feel communication between management and employees was one-way. This supports the above hypothesis that one-way and two-way, or asymmetrical and symmetrical communication are present simultaneously in this setting.

This finding can be further supported. 45.7% of respondents indicated responses towards perceived asymmetry in communication and 45.8% of respondents indicated responses towards perceived symmetrical communication. The percentages for the two variables is almost identical, leaving little room for differentiation. From this section of the data, it has proven

almost impossible to calculate the presence of one variable over, or to the exclusion of, the other. It is quite clear that both attributes are present.

A further piece of data which seems to indicate this situation was discovered through computing the combined means of the questions which were saved as variables. The mean response for the factor indicating symmetry in communication was 3.06. The mean response for the factor indicating asymmetry in communication was 3.12. Again, these responses were very similar, and too close to disclude either.

After acknowledgment of both asymmetrical and symmetrical communication, however, an interesting finding from these statistics is that the general skew of the data indicates a greater percentage of employees tend to believe that the department practices asymmetrical communication. Questions 1 and 8 (out of the three asymmetrical questions) were negatively skewed, thus indicating asymmetrical communication perceptions. Questions 3, 4, 5, and 7 out of the seven symmetrical questions were positively skewed. This also indicates asymmetrical communication perceptions.

This may seem somewhat contradictory to the previous discussion, however, this analysis has simply isolated individual areas of communication, or individual questions, which were designed to indicate different elements within each variable.

Questions 2, 6 and 9 were negatively skewed. This indicated that the majority of respondents felt comfortable in talking with their immediate supervisor. However, the negatively skewed questions mentioned on the previous page indicate they did not necessarily feel comfortable talking with top management of the department. This could indicate the finding that communication between employees and their immediate supervisor is symmetrical, but communication between employees and the dominant coalition is asymmetrical. Hence, the simultaneous presence of both symmetrical and asymmetrical variables in the data.

To further support this finding, only 10.6% of respondents indicated that the purpose of communication was to help top management be responsive to the problems of other employees. In addition, only 17.5% of respondents indicated that they felt management encouraged differences of opinion. This indicates that employees perceive asymmetrical communication between themselves and the dominant coalition.

### **CORRELATIONAL STATISTICS**

After performing many correlational analyses of the data in this section, it was evident that perceptions of the presence of either symmetry or asymmetry were not affected by the demographic variables - gender, age, education level or years employed by the Department. Analysis of correlational statistics with variables in the following questionnaire sections will be discussed in their relevant sections.

## **ANALYSIS OF SECTION II A**

### **Questions 11-19 Mechanical vs. Organic Structure**

Questions in this section were grouped in a factor analysis according to the findings of the original study. These variables have shown relatively low reliability of  $r^2=.4338$  for the questions indicating mechanical structure, and  $r^2=.4364$  for the questions indicating organic structure. However, many of the individual descriptive statistics were significant throughout this section.

Overall, the distribution of respondents skewed heavily in the mechanical direction. An interesting finding pertaining to question 17 regards employee perception on the presence of clear, recognised differences between management and subordinates in terms of office and parking space, and sociability.

84.3% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that there was a marked difference between management and subordinates in these areas. This is highly indicative of a mechanical organisational culture. Furthermore, 73.6% of respondents felt that important departmental decisions were made through mechanical processes in the hands of a few top managers. This too is supportive of mechanical perceptions in this section. Mechanical organisational structures are often less receptive to excellent communication practices (Grunig, 1995).

While 17.6% of respondents indicated that their department was organic, a majority of 43.8% indicated that their department was mechanical. Mechanical organisations are more likely to utilise asymmetric communication, as discussed in the findings of Section I.

### **CORRELATIONAL STATISTICS**

The organic variable was highly and negatively correlated to the asymmetry variable. This indicates and supports the discussion above that as perceptions of organic structure increase, perceptions of asymmetry decrease. In reverse, the mechanical variables were positively correlated with asymmetry. This indicates that asymmetrical practices are highly evident within mechanical structures.

The structure of EDWA could be contributory to the presence of both symmetry and asymmetry. Although the Department is perceived to practice symmetrically in some areas, other areas may not be receptive to symmetry because the mechanical structure does not encourage it.

Correlational relationships of the mechanical and organic variables to variables in the remaining sections will be discussed separately.

## **ANALYSIS OF SECTION II B**

### **Questions 20-67 Authoritative vs. Participative Indicator Variables**

#### **FACTOR ANALYSIS**

The factor analysis in the original study for this section accounted for only 32% of the total variance. The explanation offered for this by the researchers was that this seemingly low result was due to there being 45 variables and only 2 factors derived. "The percentage explained will be high if the factor analysis contains a small number of similar variables or the researcher allows the computer to derive a large number of factors. Theories often can be tested better, however, by increasing the number of variables and decreasing the number of factors." (IABC, 1991, 43). This poses a possible limitation to the data obtained from this section.

Although the percentage of total variance explained was quite low, it was necessary to perform a similar analysis of this section. The 19 individual concepts were also factorised. It is recognised that because this would allow for only 1.27 (57/45) respondents per question, the percentage of variance explained, and reliability of scale, will not in all cases be accurate.

The factor analysis of the 45 questions was performed in similar fashion to the original study. This factor analysis was rotated using varimax in order to maximise factor loadings. Two factors were derived from the data in this section. Similar to the IABC factor analysis, only 34.6% of the total cumulative variance was explained. Again, this is quite low.

The majority of questions factorised in a similar fashion to the Excellence Study. There were 12 questions which did not factorise the same way. There are several possible reasons for this. The first involves questions 36 and 59, and the possible reason is that the factor loadings in the IABC factor analysis could be interpreted as loading with both factors, as they are both relatively high. This would depend on the cut-off point used by researchers which is not clear in their report.

A second explanation is due to the gravity of factor loadings. Some of the factor loadings produced in this study's factor analysis are very high and could be attributed to both factors. In one case, the question was eliminated completely from the factor analysis because the factor loadings were too low to contribute to either of the factors.

However, from the data I have obtained, there appears no definite reason why these few questions have factorised unexpectedly. There does not seem to be any one variable in which the unexpected factor loadings are concentrated. It also does not appear to affect the overall reliability of the two main factors, and the nineteen concepts.

The reliability of the two factors was quite high. Cronbach's reliability of scale for the authoritative factor was .8155 and the participative factor showed .8407. It could therefore be said that although some of the concepts appear fairly unreliable in this setting, when combined, they produce a reliable scale of

analysis for the two identifying factors - authoritative management style and participative management style.

### **ANALYSIS OF THE NINETEEN CONCEPTS**

In terms of the factor analysis, the 19 concepts (Chapter 2) have been divided into 3 main groups. These groups were decided on the basis of reliability and explanation of cumulative variance. The first group included four concepts which appeared to explain a high percentage of variance with a high reliability of scale. The first of these four concepts was 'collective vs individual decision making'. This explained over half of the percentage of variance (56.0%) and had a .7154 Cronbach's reliability of scale.

The second concept was 'authoritarian vs participative management style' which explained just under half of the cumulative percentage of variance (46.6%) with a .8337 Cronbach's reliability of scale. The third concept was 'cooperation vs domination in relationships with publics' which explained 58.3% of the variance and had a Cronbach's reliability of .7372. The final concept which stood out was 'system open vs closed to its environment' which explained over three quarters of the variance (76.3%) and had a Cronbach's reliability of scale of .8660.

It is also interesting to note with regards to these factor loadings that each question within the 'authoritarian vs participative management style' concept loaded with the authoritative factor. This is exactly the same as the original

study. The same applies for the concept 'system open vs closed to its environment'.

The second group of concepts explained a reasonable amount of the variance with a reasonable reliability. These were 'holistic concern vs lack of such concern for people' which explained 39.7% of the variance and had a reliability of .5678. 'Integration vs individualism' which explained 44.6% of the cumulative variance with .5647 Cronbach's reliability of scale. 'Consensual processes' explained 40.5% of the variance with a Cronbach's reliability of .5751 and 'liberal vs conservative values' which explained 40.2% of cumulative variance with a reliability of .5749.

The remaining concepts explained a range of between 7.4% (slow vs fast evaluation and promotion) and 24.6% (collective vs individual values) of cumulative variance. The range of Cronbach's reliability for these remaining concepts was between .1378 and .3955. I have considered the data from this analysis of these concepts as not being high enough to be contributory in this setting. The explanation of the apparent absence of these concepts would be an interesting area for further in-depth research. It could however be attributed to the fact that there were only 1.2 (57/45) respondents per question. Data analysis to follow will focus on findings primarily surrounding the 8 concepts which proved reliable.

## **DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS**

### **Authoritative Findings**

Analysis of the frequency distributions throughout individual questions and the questions grouped as concepts produced several interesting findings. The first to be noted was that responses for the concept 'holistic concern vs lack of such concern for people' indicated with a mean skew of .584. This indicates that employees feel there is a lack of holistic concern within the department. Such a finding is indicative of an authoritative organisational culture.

Responses indicated a high sense of individualism, rather than integration, within the department. On each question in this concept, responses were reflective of the authoritative/individualistic department.

In respect to decision-making procedures, respondents indicated that they believed processes to be based on rational and scientific processes, rather than upon tradition. This is indicative of a participative culture. However, respondents also indicated that the final decision-making power was centralised with top management rather than through open debate - indicative of an authoritative culture. This finding on decision-making procedures presented both symmetrical and asymmetrical tendencies. This provides further evidence to support the 'mixed motive' finding discussed in Section I. It also, however, directly relates back to Kemp's (1998, 5) discussion of the 1995 Australian Workplace Relations Survey which indicated a high likelihood of formal consultative methods between employees, but (ultimately) isolated decision making processes.

Respondents indicated quite strongly that they felt their department was conservative rather than liberal. A conservative tendency is reflective of an authoritative organisational culture. Only 13.1% indicated the presence of a liberal organisation reflective of a participative culture.

### **DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS**

#### **Participative Findings**

Respondents indicated that their department was an open rather than closed system to ideas from outside. This indicates a participative organisational culture. This is somewhat different to the discussion of Watkins (1992, 257) who argues that the Australian education sector is typified by closed-system characteristics and Departments.

It was interesting to note that respondents did feel a sense of 'shared mission', with clearly defined organisational goals. 75.6% of respondents indicated that if they were one of the more powerful executives within the department, they would manage the organisation in a similar fashion.

### **CORRELATIONAL STATISTICS**

There are two significant findings from the correlational analysis of this section. The first involves the relationship between perceptions of

authoritative/participative management style and the symmetry and asymmetry variables extracted in Section I.

There is a strong relationship between these three variables. The finding is that as perceptions of authoritative management style increase, so also the perceptions of asymmetrical communication increase. Conversely, as perceptions of the authoritative management style decrease (or participative management style increases) perceptions of symmetrical communication increase. It would therefore appear that symmetry in communication is an element of participative management style. This is in accordance with the findings of the original Excellence Study.

The second finding involves the strong, positive correlation between consensual processes and the symmetry variable from Section I. This seems to indicate that as the employee's perception of the existence of internally consensual processes increases, so too does their perception of the existence of symmetry in communication.

### **ANALYSIS OF SECTION THREE**

#### **Questions 68-84 Individual versus Departmental Job Satisfaction**

#### **FACTOR ANALYSIS**

There were two factors derived from Section III. These two factors accounted for 50.9% of the cumulative variance. Factor One included the questions indicating individual job satisfaction. Factor Two included the questions indicating departmental job satisfaction. Factor One had a Cronbach's reliability of scale of 0.5910. Factor Two had a Cronbach's reliability of scale of 0.7472.

#### **DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS**

The majority of respondents indicated a sense of both individual and departmental satisfaction in the data analysed. An interesting finding was that only 28.1% of employees felt that they personally had a good opportunity for advancement in their job. The finding of this question was supported by data indicating that only 26.3% of respondents felt they had a chance to get ahead within the department. In both of these cases, the figure indicating satisfaction is around one quarter. On the same point, exactly two thirds of employees indicated they felt their job was a 'dead-end job'.

A second interesting finding was with respect to the respondents' perceptions of top management. They felt that the department as a whole did not have a genuine concern for its individual employees. This supports the previous finding under Section Two B that respondents indicated a lack of holistic concern for their well being.

### **CORRELATIONAL DATA ANALYSIS**

Some interesting findings include the departmental satisfaction variable being highly correlated with the perception of the department's ability to employ consensual processes (a variable extracted from Section II B). Individual and departmental satisfaction were strongly correlated with  $r^2$  of .7091. This indicates that as an individual experiences satisfaction within their Department, so too will they experience individual satisfaction.

Departmental and individual job satisfaction were both negatively correlated with asymmetry. This indicates that as employees perceive an increase in asymmetrical communication, departmental and individual job satisfaction decrease. Conversely, symmetrical communication was strongly and positively correlated with departmental and individual job satisfaction. This indicates that as perceptions of symmetrical communication increase, so too do individual and departmental job satisfaction. This supports the findings of the Excellence Study in that symmetrical communication was seen to be a variable of an excellent organisation which produced a satisfying environment for employees.

## **ANALYSIS OF SECTION IV**

### **Questions 85 through 106 Cultural and Gender Diversity**

A factor analysis was not performed on this section as there was only one construct under evaluation. This section had a high Cronbach's reliability of scale at .8719. The preliminary medium for analysis of this construct is therefore descriptive.

The most significant finding in this section is that the majority of respondents indicated that they felt their department was gender and culturally sensitive. They agreed that it had enacted sufficient policies to encompass this according to relevant needs.

Probably the only indication that could be classed as negative in this section would be that only 5.3% of respondents felt that their department provided sufficient membership in professional associations as an employee benefit. This finding is also indicated in the two Dominant Coalition questionnaires. The first respondent answered neutral and the second strongly disagreed that membership of employee associations was a benefit provided.

It was also apparent that the department does not provide any child care services at present. 100% of respondents indicated that child care services were not provided. This lack of childcare services is also evident in the dominant coalition respondents who answered in a similar fashion. This should

not be considered a negative finding as the provision of child care services to employees is not common practice for West Australian State Government.

The findings in this section strongly indicate that the strategic planning in place by EDWA has been successful and that it is, or has become, a gender and culturally diverse and sensitive Department. The cultural and gender diversity of the Department is an organisational culture characteristic supportive of excellent communication.

### **DOMINANT COALITION ANALYSIS**

There are two significant findings of the two dominant coalition questionnaires other than those previously mentioned. The first is that the perception of activist pressure is high within top management. However, the amount of time they devote to managing such external pressures is between 0 and 20 per cent of their allocated work time. This appears to be quite low for a management which feels under a considerable degree of pressure from activist groups. Respondents, however, felt that it was important that they were aware of external publics.

As stated in previous chapters, with discussions of Shergold (1997, 32), it is not uncommon for government departments to experience a degree of activist pressure. However, this finding could possibly indicate a Department which, although aware of its external environments, does not always employ excellent communication practices with all of their relevant publics. It would be

interesting to determine whether the Department has identified all relevant publics, and if it has a 'crisis' communication management plan for situations involving activist pressure.

The second interesting finding was that the communication function within the Department was perceived as being a technical tool. This limited the power of the top communicator as a member of the dominant coalition, and increased the tendency of the top communicator performing routine operations. This limitation could severely hinder the strategic potential of public relations as a communication management and relationship building function within EDWA.

CHARTER

CONCLUSIONS &  
RECOMMENDATIONS

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are several interesting conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis performed. The first is that there is sufficient evidence to indicate the simultaneous existence of both symmetrical and asymmetrical communication. This seems indicative of Grunig's 'mixed motive' model of communication. From a public relations perspective, because this is a fairly new area of theory, this is very interesting and shows room for further research.

Awareness of this finding by EDWA should enable them to focus on the areas indicating asymmetry, which appeared most significant in the data, for example, removing perceived autocratic distances between employees and the dominant coalition. Achievement of this could be through avenues such as EDWA's 'Communication Plan', currently under development. The 'Communication Plan' would, however, have to pay a considerable amount of attention to internal communication management.

A second conclusion is that throughout this analysis, it appeared that the organisational structure was mechanic. Mechanical structures are indicative of authoritative cultures. Areas highlighted in the data, in which there may exist room for improvement, again include the dominant coalition. It was a general finding within the Department that perceived differences between the dominant coalition and employees in material terms were very high. This image could be interfering with employee's ability to communicate with the dominant coalition. It could be perceived that the distance between the two is too great an obstacle.

One of the major findings of the original Excellence study was the presence of the authoritative and participative factors in Section 2B. It was very interesting to note their presence, and similarity, in this EDWA study. As discussed in Chapter 4, Section 2B, there was a combination of areas in which both the authoritative factor and participative factor dominated.

Those areas indicating an authoritative factor included the perception that there exists a lack of holistic concern by top management, a lack of social atmosphere between employees and management, a high sense of individualism, centralised decision-making power and employee perceptions of a conservative Department. Each of these variables cultivates a less than excellent communication culture, according to Grunig's Excellence study.

Centralised decision-making could be one explanation for the media exploitation of Departmental processes in the *Sunday Times* articles discussed in Chapter 3 and in Appendix 1. The areas indicating the participative factor evident within the Department, however, included a sense of shared mission and an open-system department. These variables encourage (and are receptive to) excellent communication practices.

It appeared in the data that the majority of employees were satisfied with both their Department and their position. An interesting conclusion, however, was that the majority of respondents felt they did not have much opportunity for advancement or promotion, and two thirds indicated that theirs is a dead-end job. The second finding relating to this section was that most employees, as

indicated in several of the data analysis sections, felt that top management did not have a genuine concern for individual employees. As previously discussed, it appeared that this finding was more closely related to asymmetry in communication, and to an authoritative culture.

A positive finding for EDWA involves the finding that the organisation rated very highly on the construct involving gender and cultural diversity. The majority of respondents praised the efforts of the Department with respect to its gender and cultural empowerment and sensitivity. This could be due to the strategic plans in place surrounding this issue which were discussed in Chapter 2 of this report.

An opportunity for EDWA would be to utilise public relations as a strategic tool, rather than to confine it to a technical role. This could open many opportunities for the Department in terms of its ability to make accountable decisions, employee two-way symmetrical communication and build positive relationships with all relevant internal and external publics.

As this was not an 'Excellence Study', an overall 'Excellence Score' has not been calculated. However, it would be fair to say that the EDWA did not stand out as a primarily authoritative or a primarily participative organisation, and that it did not appear to practice solely symmetrical or solely asymmetrical communication. While, as with most organisations, there is room for improvement, it is my opinion that the EDWA is at a solid starting point should it

wish to improve on its current position, and this analysis offers a number of constructive ways forward in pursuit of excellence.

ΠΖΟ Χ-ΟΖΠΠΑ

**RESPONSE BOXES – EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE**

- Q1/106**      1 Strongly Disagree  
                 2 Disagree  
                 3 Neutral  
                 4 Agree  
                 5 Strongly Agree
- Q107/108**   1 High School or less  
                 2 Some college / technical training  
                 3 Bachelor  
                 4 Masters  
                 5 Doctorate
- Q109**        1 Less than 18 years  
                 2 19 – 24 years  
                 3 25– 34 years  
                 4 35 – 44 years  
                 5 45 – 54 years  
                 6 55+ years
- Q110**        1 Less than 5 years  
                 2 6 – 10 years  
                 3 11 – 15 years  
                 4 16 – 20 years  
                 5 More than 21 years
- Q111**        1 Level 1  
                 2 Level 2  
                 3 Level 3  
                 4 Level 4  
                 5 Level 5  
                 6 Level 6  
                 7 Level 7  
                 8 Level 8  
                 9 Level 9
- Q112**        1 Male  
                 2 Female

# EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AN EMPLOYEE OF THE DEPARTMENT

By completing this questionnaire, you will help determine how communications programs should be managed to make the greatest contribution to the success of a government department.

This questionnaire is an independent study. It is derived from a 12 year, international communications study involving corporations, associations, government agencies and other non-profit organisations, namely 'The Excellence Study' (Grunig et al, 1986). This was conducted throughout the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The original study was funded by the IABC Research Foundation of the International Association of Business Communicators and several other corporations. The questionnaires were developed by researchers at the University of Maryland, Syracuse University, San Diego State University, and the Cranfield Institute of Technology in the UK.

Thank you, in advance, for completing this questionnaire. Your cooperation will help to help extend the success of one of the most important research projects in the history of public relations and business communication.

## HOW TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Each question is accompanied with its own 'drop box'. Answers can be selected through pointing on the down arrow with your mouse and selecting the desired response with the left mouse button.

For example:



- Step One:** Click on the down arrow with your left mouse button.  
**Step Two:** Select your desired response by clicking on it with left mouse button.  
**Step Three:** Desired response will be displayed in the box.

It is important that you answer every item in the questionnaire, but if you feel you do not know the answer to a question, please leave it blank. For this questionnaire, "department" refers to the Western Australian Education Department, and "section" refers to the unit within the department of which you are a part. For example; the administration section, the finance section, the human resources section.

### PLEASE NOTE:

**ALL RESPONSES WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.**

**If you would like a copy of the final report,  
Please respond to the email address given at the end of this questionnaire.**

### **SECTION ONE**

The first set of items describes the ways in which communication takes place in many departments. Some items may describe communication in this department accurately. Others may not. For each item, please select your answer from the corresponding drop-box located to the right of each question.

- 1 The purpose of communication in this department is to get employees to behave in the way top management want them to behave.
- 2 I am comfortable in talking with management about my performance.
- 3 Most communication between management and other employees in this department can be said to be two-way communication.
- 4 This department encourages differences of opinion.
- 5 The purpose of communication in this department is to help top management to be responsive to the problems of other employees.
- 6 My supervisor encourages differences of opinion.
- 7 I am usually informed about major changes in policy that affect my job before they take place.
- 8 Most communication in this department is one-way: from management to other employees.
- 9 I am comfortable in talking with my immediate supervisor when things are going wrong.
- 10 I seldom get feedback when I communicate with management.

### **SECTION TWO**

Next, please choose a number on the same scale to indicate the extent to when you agree that each of the following items describes your department accurately compared with your opinion of other state government departments.

- 11 In this department, important decisions are generally made by a few top managers alone rather than by people throughout the department.
- 12 I have a personal influence on decisions and policies of this department.
- 13 It is difficult for a person who begins in the lower ranks of this department to move to an important administrative or supervisory position within 10 years.
- 14 I have a great deal of freedom in making decisions about my work without clearing those decisions with people at higher levels of the department.
- 15 I must keep reading, learning, and studying almost every day to do my job adequately.
- 16 My section has a printed organisational chart, which nearly everyone follows closely.
- 17 In this department, there are clear and recognised differences between superiors and subordinates. These differences can be seen in larger offices, quality of office furniture, close-in parking spaces, or frequency of superiors and subordinates having lunch together.
- 18 I have a say in decisions that affect my job.
- 19 My actual work seldom deviates from a written job description for my position.
- 20 This department has clearly defined goals.

- 21 Each project in this department, even if it is a complicated one requiring a team effort, usually is divided into tasks and subtasks. Each employee is assigned subtasks and is solely responsible for the results of his or her work.
- 22 If I were one of the most powerful executives within this department, I would manage the department in the same way as the executives now in power are managing it.
- 23 Advancement in this department is based more on who you know than on how well you perform.
- 24 Most decisions in this department are made by individuals largely working alone.
- 25 Most employees in this department share a common sense of mission that most think is worth striving to achieve.
- 26 This department is a place where people tend to separate their work life from their home and social life. Most superiors feel that it is not their responsibility, nor their right, to know very much about the personal problems of their subordinates.
- 27 People in this department move frequently to other employers, including those who are successful and those who are not.
- 28 People who work here meet frequently off the job
- 29 Most projects in this department are done through teamwork. Each individual is expected to contribute to the team effort, but the team as a whole is ultimately held accountable and rewarded or punished for its efforts.
- 30 Most sections within this department do not share a common mission; each has different priorities that conflict with the priorities of other departments.
- 31 Performance is important within this department, but promotions are made only after careful evaluation of an individual over a long period of time.
- 32 Most people in this department are specialists who are known outside the organisation as experts in engineering, marketing, accounting, or a similar field.
- 33 Senior managers of this department frequently socialise with other employees off the job.
- 34 The goals of this department are different from my personal goals.
- 35 People are evaluated often in this department through hard measures such as profitability, or production. For those who receive favourable evaluations, promotion can be rapid.
- 36 Most decisions in this department are made after thorough discussion between all people who will be affected in a major way.
- 37 This department is open to new ideas from outside.
- 38 The typical career in this department is long-term; the department rarely has lay-offs and terminations.
- 39 People take interest in each other in this department. It is common to find supervisors who feel that it is part of their job to know about personal problems that may be bothering their subordinates.
- 40 Senior management in this department believes that it must have nearly total control over the behaviour of subordinates.

41	Most people do not specialise within this department. They rotate among areas such as customer service, records, marketing, personnel or similar functions.	<input type="text"/>
42	The sections in this department seem to work together like a well-oiled machine.	<input type="text"/>
43	Rigid control by management often makes it difficult for me to be innovative in this department.	<input type="text"/>
44	Managers in this department seem to believe that employees lack initiative and must constantly be given instruction.	<input type="text"/>
45	This department seems to look to the future rather than to the past.	<input type="text"/>
46	This department can be classified as conservative.	<input type="text"/>
47	Nearly everyone feels like he or she is part of a team in this department.	<input type="text"/>
48	Being on time is extremely important in this department.	<input type="text"/>
49	Senior managers in this department care deeply about other employees.	<input type="text"/>
50	Decisions are usually based on tradition – the way things have been done.	<input type="text"/>
51	Senior management in this organisation believe that they know best because they have more knowledge than lower-level employees.	<input type="text"/>
52	Before decisions can be made here, committees usually are set up to study the issue.	<input type="text"/>
53	This department usually is willing to negotiate with external groups that disagree with it.	<input type="text"/>
54	This department usually is closed to new ideas from outside.	<input type="text"/>
55	Major decisions usually are based on open debate in this department.	<input type="text"/>
56	Senior managers here believe in the sharing of power and responsibility with lower-level employees.	<input type="text"/>
57	Usually, we make decisions by trial-and-error. We try things and see if they work.	<input type="text"/>
58	Everyone is treated as an equal in this department.	<input type="text"/>
59	Decisions in this department are usually based on scientific research.	<input type="text"/>
60	Innovation probably is the most important goal of this department.	<input type="text"/>
61	Most people who work here seem to be afraid of senior managers.	<input type="text"/>
62	Everyone works together here to make the department effective.	<input type="text"/>
63	Decisions usually are based on authority – the way the head of the department and the people close to him or her want things done.	<input type="text"/>
64	This department can be classified as liberal.	<input type="text"/>
65	This department tries to dominate people outside who disagree with it.	<input type="text"/>
66	This department is open to ideas from outside.	<input type="text"/>
67	Efficiency is probably the most important goal in this department.	<input type="text"/>

### SECTION THREE

The third set of questions asks how satisfied you are with your job and the quality of life in this department. Describe the extent to which you agree that each item accurately portrays how you feel about this department in comparison with the answer that your opinion of an average employee in most departments would give to a typical one of these items.

- |    |  |                      |
|----|--|----------------------|
| 68 | On the whole, my job is interesting and challenging.                           | <input type="text"/> |
| 69 | In general, this department has treated me well.                               | <input type="text"/> |
| 70 | I look forward to coming to work almost every day.                             | <input type="text"/> |
| 71 | I feel as though I have a real chance to get ahead in this department.         | <input type="text"/> |
| 72 | The best-qualified people usually are chosen for promotion in this department. | <input type="text"/> |
| 73 | My work gives me a sense of accomplishment.                                    | <input type="text"/> |
| 74 | I am satisfied with my pay and benefits.                                       | <input type="text"/> |
| 75 | This department has a genuine concern for the welfare of its employees.        | <input type="text"/> |
| 76 | My work is a dead-end job.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 77 | I am satisfied with my day-to-day working conditions.                          | <input type="text"/> |
| 78 | I have found this department to be a good place to work.                       | <input type="text"/> |
| 79 | Both men and women are treated well in this department                         | <input type="text"/> |
| 80 | My immediate supervisor is hard to please.                                     | <input type="text"/> |
| 81 | It is easy to work with my co-workers.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 82 | There is a good opportunity for advancement in my job.                         | <input type="text"/> |
| 83 | Minorities are treated well in this department.                                | <input type="text"/> |
| 84 | My work is boring.   | <input type="text"/> |

### SECTION FOUR

The next set of items asks specifically about the way your department deals with its female employees. Indicate the extent to which you agree with how accurately each item describes how your department compares with an average department on a typical one of these items.

**This department has:**

- |    |  |                      |
|----|--|----------------------|
| 85 | Enacted specific policies, procedures or programs designed to promote an understanding of the concerns of female employees.      | <input type="text"/> |
| 86 | Provided a supportive climate for women at work.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 87 | Monitored the use of sexist language in the organisation's communication.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 88 | Reviewed organisational policies for their effect on women.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 89 | Provided opportunities for women who must relocate or who have relocated.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 90 | Allowed flexi time for employees.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 91 | Avoided "perks" that divide employees on the basis of their gender and tenure, such as all-male clubs or executive dining rooms. | <input type="text"/> |
| 92 | Established effective policies to deal with sexual discrimination.   | <input type="text"/> |

- 93 Developed specific guidelines for handling problems of sexual harassment.
- 94 Set up a system of maternity and paternity leave.
- 95 Provided child care services
- 96 Built a system of multiple employment centers that allow mobility for employees.
- 97 Furthered the talents of women through mentoring programs.
- 98 Fostered women's leadership abilities.
- 99 Funded or reimbursed employees for work-related travel.
- 100 Included membership in professional associations as an employee benefit.
- 101 Provided opportunities for women to take risks.
- 102 Encouraged women who may seem less "senior-minded" about their careers than men.
- 103 Groomed women for management by selecting them as "informal assistants" to those in the next-higher position.
- 104 Included women in the informal informational network.
- 105 Made available comparable data to help women in salary negotiations.
- 106 Paid men and women equally for equal or comparable work.

#### **SECTION FIVE**

Finally, we have a few questions about you.

- 107 How much education do you have?
- 108 What is the minimum amount of education required for your job?
- 109 How old are you?
- 110 How many years have you worked in this organisation?
- 111 Which level of government employee are you?
- 112 Are you:

**THANK YOU. THAT COMPLETES THE QUESITONNAIRE**

**PLEASE RETURN TO THE EMAIL LOCATED BELOW BY  
WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER, 1998.**

**odonok@west\_coast.training.wa.gov.au**

**If you would like further information, please contact  
Katherine O'Donoghue  
Ph. 0411 032 664**

**RESPONSE BOXES – TOP MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Q1/4, 17/22, 61/64**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**Q5/16, 23, 40, 58/60**

- 1 Very Weak
- 2 Weak
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Strong
- 5 Very Strong

**Q24/39, 42/57, 68/89**

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

**Q41**

- 1 More than –51%
  - 2 –50% - -40%
  - 3 –39% - -30%
  - 4 –29% - -20%
  - 5 –19% - -10%
  - 6 –9% - 0%
  - 7 1% - 10%
  - 8 11% - 20%
  - 9 21% - 30%
  - 10 31% - 40%
  - 11 41% - 50%
  - 12 51% - 60%
  - 13 61% - 70%
  - 14 71% - 80%
  - 15 81% - 90%
  - 16 91% - 100%
  - 17 101% - 110%
  - 18 111% - 120%
  - 19 121% - 130%
  - 20 131% - 140%
  - 21 141% - 150%
  - 22 More than 151%
-

- Q65/66**
- 1 0% - 10%
  - 2 11% - 20%
  - 3 21% - 30%
  - 4 31% - 40%
  - 5 41% - 50%
  - 6 51% - 60%
  - 7 61% - 70%
  - 8 71% - 80%
  - 9 81% - 90%
  - 10 91% - 100%
- Q67**
- 1 Very little
  - 2 Little
  - 3 Neutral
  - 4 Great
  - 5 Very Great
- Q90/91**
- 1 High School or less
  - 6 Some college / technical training
  - 7 Bachelor
  - 8 Masters
  - 9 Doctorate
- Q92**
- 1 Less than 18 years
  - 7 19 – 24 years
  - 8 25– 34 years
  - 9 35 – 44 years
  - 10 45 – 54 years
  - 11 55+ years
- Q93**
- 1 Less than 5 years
  - 6 6 – 10 years
  - 7 11 – 15 years
  - 8 16 – 20 years
  - 9 More than 21 years
- Q94**
- 1 Level 1
  - 10 Level 2
  - 11 Level 3
  - 12 Level 4
  - 13 Level 5
  - 14 Level 6
  - 15 Level 7
  - 16 Level 8
  - 17 Level 9
- Q95**
- 1 Male
  - 3 Female
-

# EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SENIOR MANAGEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT

By completing this questionnaire, you will help determine how communications programs should be managed to make the greatest contribution to the success of a government department.

This questionnaire is part of an independent study. It is derived from a 12 year, international communications study involving corporations, associations, government agencies and other non-profit organisations, namely 'The Excellence Study' (Grunig et al, 1986). This was conducted throughout the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The original study was funded by the IABC Research Foundation of the International Association of Business Communicators and several other corporations. The questionnaires were developed by researchers at the University of Maryland, Syracuse University, San Diego State University, and the Cranfield Institute of Technology in the UK.

Thank you, in advance, for completing this questionnaire. Your cooperation will help to help extend the success of one of the most important research projects in the history of public relations and business communication.

## HOW TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Each question is accompanied with its own 'drop box'. Answers can be selected through pointing on the down arrow with your mouse and selecting the desired response with the left mouse button.

For example:



- Step One:** Click on the down arrow with your left mouse button.  
**Step Two:** Select your desired response by clicking on it with left mouse button.  
**Step Three:** Your desired response will be displayed in the box.

It is important that you answer every item in the questionnaire, but if you feel you do not know the answer to a question, please leave it blank. For this questionnaire, "department" refers to the Western Australian Education Department, and "section" refers to the unit within the department of which you are a part. For example; the administration section, the finance section, the human resources section.

### PLEASE NOTE:

**ALL RESPONSES WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.**

**If you would like a copy of the final report,  
Please respond to the email address given at the end of this questionnaire.**

### SECTION ONE

The first series of questions asks about the relationship of your communications section with senior management of the department.

- 1 Does your communications section report directly to the Director General in your department?
- 2 (If your answer to Q1 was no) Does an indirect reporting relationship exist then, from the communications section to the Director General (for example, in which the section reports directly on some matters but not on all?)
- 3 If there is no direct or indirect reporting relationship to the Director General, does the section report then to:
- 4 A senior manager who in turn reports to the most senior manager?
- 4 A more junior level of management?

### SECTION TWO

This section helps describe the extent to which your communications department makes a contribution to each of the following functions of your department. The functions are rated as offering either a very weak, weak, neutral, strong or very strong contribution.

- 5 Strategic planning.
- 6 Response to major social issues.
- 7 Major initiatives (eg. Acquisitions, major new programs, movements into new markets, launches of new services).
- 8 Routine operations (eg. Development and maintenance of employee communication, community relations or media relations programs).

If your communications section makes no contribution to strategic planning and decision making, please go to Question 17 on the next page.

### SECTION THREE

This section asks you to estimate the extent to which your communications section makes a contribution to strategic planning and decision making through each of the following activities.

- 9 Regularly conducted and routine research activities.
- 10 Specific research conducted to answer specific questions.
- 11 Formal approaches to gathering information for use in decision making other than research.
- 12 Informal approaches to gathering information.
- 13 Contacts with knowledgeable people outside the department.
- 14 Judgement based on experience.
- 15 Other (please type in here and then flag drop-box)
- 16 Other (please type in here and then flag drop box)

### SECTION FOUR

Today's organisations/government departments are so complex that many of the require more than a single leader to operate effectively. Instead of a single powerful person, then, many organisations are controlled by a group of powerful people – often called the 'dominant coalition'.

- 17 In your opinion, is the head of public relations, public affairs or communications represented in this power elite?

- 18 Are any of the representatives of external groups specified below included in the power elite? Employee Associations
- 19 Clients
- 20 Suppliers
- 21 Competitors
- 22 Activist Groups

### SECTION FIVE

The "dominant coalition" or executive/senior managers who run a department generally have a prevailing idea about how public relations, public affairs, or communications management should be practiced. Please indicate how you think the dominant coalition in this department believes public relations should be practiced.

- 23 In my department, the level of support for the communications section is:
- 24 The purpose of communications is, quite simply, to get publicity for this department.
- 25 After completing a communications program, research should be done to determine how effective this program has been in changing people's attitudes.
- 26 In the communications section, nearly everyone is so busy writing news stories or producing publications that there is no time to do research.
- 27 In communications, the broad goal is to persuade public to behave as the department wants them to behave.
- 28 The purpose of communications is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and public the organisation affects.
- 29 Before starting a communications program, one should look at attitude surveys to make sure the department and its policies are described in ways its public would be more likely to accept.
- 30 In communications management, accurate information should be disseminated but unfavourable information should not be volunteered.
- 31 Before starting a communications program, surveys or informal research should be done to find out how much management and our publics understand each other.
- 32 In communications management, one mostly attempts to get favourable publicity into the media and to keep unfavourable publicity out.
- 33 Before beginning a communications program, one should do research to determine public attitudes toward the department and how they might be changed.
- 34 The success of a communications program can be determined from the number of people who attend an event or who use products and services.
- 35 For this department, communications management and publicity mean essentially the same thing.
- 36 The purpose of communications management is to change the attitudes and behaviour of management as much as it is to change the attitudes and behaviours of publics.
- 37 Keeping a clipping file is about the only way there is to determine the success of communications management and the communications section.

- 38 Communications management should provide mediation for the department – to help management and publics negotiate conflict.
- 39 Communications management is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for the department or a mediator between management and publics.

#### SECTION SIX

Think next about the value you think your communications section has to the department. Responses are grouped as: very strong value, strong value, neutral, weak value, very weak value.

- 40 Estimate the value that you think the communications section has in comparison with another typical section within this department.

#### SECTION SEVEN

- 41 Now, think about the value your communications department has to this department in terms of a cost-benefit ratio. Think of the money that your department budgets for communications each year – both for the department itself and for outside consulting firms (if applicable). Then, estimate the value of the section to the department as a percentage of the section's budget.

A percentage less than 100% would indicate that you think the department provides benefits worth less than the amount budgeted. 100% would indicate that the benefits equal the costs. A percentage greater than 100% would indicate that the benefits are worth more than the amount budgeted.

#### SECTION EIGHT

Please choose an answer that indicates how well each of the following items describes the work that you think the *head of your communications section* should do. Please do not score items highly if you believe employees within the section other than the head of the section should do the tasks.

- 42 He or she should produce brochures, pamphlets, and other publications.
- 43 He or she should create opportunities for management to hear the views of various internal and external publics.
- 44 He or she should take responsibility for the success or failure of the department's communication or public relations programs.
- 45 He or she should be the person who writes communication materials.
- 46 He or she should represent the department at events and meetings.
- 47 He or she should maintain media contacts for the department.
- 48 He or she should make communication policy decisions.
- 49 He or she should be held accountable for the success or failure of communications programs.
- 50 He or she should keep others in the department informed of what the media report about the department and other important issues.
- 51 Although he or she does not make communication policy decision, he or she should provide decision makers with suggestions, recommendations and plans.
- 52 He or she should do photography and graphics for communication or public relations materials.
- 53 He or she should be responsible for placing news releases.
- 54 He or she should edit or rewrite for grammar and spelling materials written by others within the department.

- 55 Because of his or her experience and training, others should consider him or her the department's expert in solving communication or public relations problems.
- 56 He or she should be senior counsel to the top decision makers when communication or public relations issues are involved.
- 57 He or she should use journalistic skills to figure out what the media will consider newsworthy about the organisation.

### SECTION NINE

The next series of questions asks about the environment of your department and your estimate of its importance.

- 58 Please estimate the strength of pressure your department has experienced from activist groups.
- 59 Think of the most recent case, or a typical example, when your department was pressured by an activist group. How strong was the success of the activist group in achieving its goals in its dealings with your department.
- 60 Next, in the same case as above, please describe the strength of success you think your department experienced with response to the activist group in achieving its goals.
- 61 Where do you tend to find out about activist pressure on your department?
- The pressure group itself
  - Media Coverage
  - The communications/public relations section
  - Others in your department
- 65 Please estimate the percentage of your time, as a senior manager, that you spend on communication activities *inside* the organisation.
- 66 Please estimate the percentage of your time as a senior manager that you spend on communication activities *outside* the organisation.
- 67 To what extent do you feel it is important for you and other senior managers in this department to be aware of what people outside the department are doing that may affect the department?

### SECTION TEN

This next set of items moves from the external to the internal environment of your department – specifically with the way in which your department deals with its women employees. For each item, use the scale shown below to estimate how your overall department, not just the communications section, compares with an average government department on a typical one of these items.

#### ***This department has:***

- 68 Enacted specific policies, procedures or programs designed to promote an understanding of the concerns of female employees.
- 69 Provided a supportive climate for women at work.
- 70 Monitored the use of sexist language in all realms of the department's communication.
- 71 Reviewed departmental policies for their effects on women.
- 72 Provided opportunities for women who must relocate or who have relocated.
- 73 Allowed flexi time for employees.

- |    |  |                      |
|----|--|----------------------|
| 74 | Avoided "perks" that divide employees on the basis of their gender and tenure, such as all-male clubs or executive dining rooms. | <input type="text"/> |
| 75 | Established effective policies to deal with sexual discrimination.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 76 | Developed specific guidelines for handling problems of sexual harassment.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 77 | Set up a system of maternity and paternity leave.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 78 | Provided child care services.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 79 | Built a system of multiple employment centres that allow mobility for employees.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 80 | Furthered the talents of women through mentoring programs.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 81 | Fostered women's leadership abilities.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 82 | Funded or reimbursed employees for work-related travel.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 83 | Included membership in professional associations as an employee benefit.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 84 | Provided opportunities for women to take risks.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 85 | Encouraged women who may seem less "senior minded" about their careers than men.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 86 | Groomed women for management by selecting them as "informal assistants" to those in the next-higher position.                    | <input type="text"/> |
| 87 | Included women in the informal informational network.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 88 | Made available comparable data to help women in salary negotiations.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 89 | Paid men and women equally for equal or comparable work.   | <input type="text"/> |

### SECTION ELEVEN

Finally, we have a few questions about you

- |    |   |                      |
|----|---|----------------------|
| 90 | How much education do you have?                                       | <input type="text"/> |
| 91 | What is the <i>minimum</i> amount of education required for your job? | <input type="text"/> |
| 92 | How old are you?  | <input type="text"/> |
| 93 | How many years have you worked in this department?                    | <input type="text"/> |
| 94 | What is your level of employment?                                     | <input type="text"/> |
| 95 | Are you:  | <input type="text"/> |

**THANK YOU. THAT COMPLETES THE QUESTIONNAIRE.**

**PLEASE RETURN TO THE EMAIL ADDRESS BELOW BY  
WEDNESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 1998.**

**[odonok@west\\_coast.training.wa.gov.au](mailto:odonok@west_coast.training.wa.gov.au)**

**If you would like further information or a copy of the final report, please contact:**

**Katherine O'Donoghue**

**Ph. 0411 032 664**

**Email: [odonok@west\\_coast.training.wa.gov.au](mailto:odonok@west_coast.training.wa.gov.au)**

0 3 4 X - D Z M T A

# Bullies, druggie school, boy claim

By BRUCE BUTLER

A 14-YEAR-OLD boy has missed five weeks of high school because of bullying and claims of rampant drug-taking among other students.

But the Education Department refuses to allow him to transfer to a nearby school.

The boy's mother, Leanne Digby, says a combination of bullying and entrenched drug culture at Harvey Senior High School has made it unsafe for her son.

Ms Digby removed son Matt from Harvey High in November and he has missed the first week of school this year.

Matt claims students as young as 13 and 14 smoke marijuana, take dexamphetamines — recently identified as a problem drug in WA schools — and drink alcohol from soft-drink cans.

"That is not an environment I want my son to be educated in," a worried Ms Digby said.

Matt said: "Some of the students are a bit over the top."

The slightly built teenager claims he has been picked on, bullied, threatened with violence and taunted by other students after he injured his knee at school last year.

"When I wore a bandage on my knee for a few weeks some of the kids called me a cripple," he said.

"They just try to make you feel bad, call me names. I'm pretty small, so most kids are bigger than me."

Matt admitted he resorted to carrying a fishing knife last year to protect himself from a bigger boy.

But it is the drug culture which Ms Digby is most concerned about.

Matt, who wants to be a chiropractor, said: "Some of them are into drugs first thing

in the morning and taking dexamphetamines.

"They'd smoke anything and they buy a can of Coke and one of them will have alcohol and they put it in there and walk freely around the school.

"You can smell it on their breath.

"They crush up Panadol and snort it.

"Kids ask to go to the toilet, go and do drugs and then come back and muck up in class."

School principal Garry Bamford said Harvey High did not have a serious drug problem, nor were bullies out of control at his school.

"There are drugs in every school, but I have not seen any evidence of alcohol," he said.

"The boy (Matt) has been bullied a bit, but there are bullies in every school.

"We have got a few bullies, we know who they are and we trample all over them."

Education Department district director in Bunbury Barry Bastow said Ms Digby's application to enrol Matt at Australind High School was refused because the school, with 1300 students, was already overcrowded.

"We consider Harvey is a safe environment. It is a good school," he said.

Sergeant Tony Francis of Harvey Police said that if one believed the stories, everybody in Harvey was a drug dealer.

He denied there was a drug problem at the school, but conceded one student went before a juvenile justice panel last year for dealing in dexamphetamines and another had been cleared recently when pharmacology tests confirmed that the "drugs" the student was dealing in were actually Panadol and Bex tablets.



HOME WORK: Leanne Digby assists son Matt with his studies from Harvey Senior High School.

■ Editorial: Page 14

February 7, 1999

# F for fail in school disputes

**T**HE Education Department is earning poor marks in the way it is handling two disputes, one with a principal and the other involving a student.

The disputes are spawning a large load of bureaucratic red tape, marooning the people involved in limbo.

First there was the extraordinary case, reported in *The Sunday Times* last week, of Cunderdin Agricultural College principal Bruce Bailey who was barred from speaking to his own staff. Some commonsense prevailed when that gag was lifted this week.

But Mr Bailey's position remains unresolved. He was offered two transfers — which would have meant a demotion and substantial pay cut — and refused to budge.

He is barred from entering his office, 50m away from where he lives in the college principal's residence.

And he has to drive 60km each day to Northam to sit idly in the regional office.

That's absurd. Regardless of the rights and wrongs of the dispute, it is up to the department to sort out the problems — and quickly. The dispute has been dragging on for 10 months!

The second dispute involves a 14-year-old boy who was withdrawn from Harvey Senior High School by his mother after bullying and harassment by other students.

The mother wants to send her son to the nearby Australind High School but the department says there is no room there. The department has offered other options, but all unacceptable to the mother.

Again, regardless of who is right or wrong, the result is unacceptable. The boy missed four weeks of school last year and is still missing schooling!

For the boy's sake the department should not allow this dispute to go on.

The Education Department has an army of administrators who should be solving problems such as these expeditiously.

We have to wonder whether a point will be reached where the administrators outnumber the teachers.

PAGE 14

## Home violence

## Cheque's in the mail...

ABOUT 2000 newly appointed teachers didn't get paid this week because of a glitch in the Education Department's new computer system.

State School Teachers' Union president Brian Lindberg said that after an urgent meeting on Friday the department gave an assurance the problem would be fixed and teachers paid by Wednesday or, in urgent cases, be issued cheques manually.

PAGE 14  
THE SUNDAY TIMES  
FEBRUARY 7

STICZKA

---

## REFERENCES

- Allen German, Professor G (1977) *The Individual's Security In A Changing World in Australia – Towards a post-industrialist society*, University of Western Australia Extension Service, p30-41
- Butler, Bruce (1999) *Bullies, druggies at school, boy claims* The Sunday Times, February 7, 13
- Button, John (1993) *The Australian Public Sector: One Person's View*, Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration, December, 75, 69-73
- Chen, Ni; Culbertson, H (1992) *Two Contrasting Approaches of Government Public Relations in Mainland China*, Public Relations Quarterly, Fall 1992, 37(3), 36-41
- Crowley, Brian Lee (1987) *The Self, The Individual and The Community*, Clarendon Press, Oxford
- Davis, G; Wanna, J; Warhurst, J; Weller, P (1993) *Public Policy in Australia*, Second Edition, Allen and Unwin, NSW, Australia
- Dozier, David M; Grunig, James; Grunig, Larissa A (1995) *Manager's Guide to Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc, Publishers, New Jersey
- Editorial (1999) *F for fail in school disputes*, The Sunday Times, February 7, 14
- Education Department of Western Australia web page  
(<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au>)
- Faulkes, Wendy (1993) *Tomorrow's Disputes : Designing the Process to Meet the Times in Australian Made Dispute Resolution – Community Options for the Future*, Proceedings of the National Conference 1993, Australian Dispute Resolution Association Inc, 3-14
- Graham, Peter (1995) *Are Public Sector Organisations Becoming Customer Centred?* Marketing Intelligence and Planning, 13(1), 35-47
- Greyser, Stephen A (1997) *Consumer Research and the Public Policy Process Then and Now*, Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, Spring, 16(1), 137-138
- Hill, Michael (1993) *Understanding Social Policy*, Fourth Edition, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, UK
- Hill, Michael; Bramley, Glen (1986) *Analysing Social Policy*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, UK

- 
- Johnson, James (1997) *Communication, Criticism and the Postmodern Consensus – An Unfashionable Interpretation of Michael Foucault*, Political Theory: An International Journal of Political Philosophy, August 25(4), 559-583
- Jones, Russell; Marshall, Carolyn; Bergman, Thomas (1996) *Can a Marketing Campaign be used to Achieve Public Policy Goals?* Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, Spring, 15(1), 98-107
- Keating, Paul (1993) *Performance and Accountability in the Public Service*, Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration, 75, December, 1-7
- Kelly, Paul (1993) *The End of Certainty – I* Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration, December, 75, 156-157
- Lindblom, Charles E; Woodhouse, Edward J (1993) *The Policy Making Process*, Third Edition, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, USA
- Maarek, Philippe J (1995) *Political Marketing and Communication*, John Libbey and Company, London
- Marsh, Ian (1997) *Strategic Policy-Making as a Political 'Learning System'* Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration, September, 73, 1-7
- Mazis, Michael B (1997) *Marketing and Public Policy: Prospects for the Future*, Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, Spring, 16(1), 139-143
- Nivola, Pietro S (1998) *Lifting the Heavy Hand*, The Brookings Review, Winter 16(1), 4-5 (from web page [http://www.brookings.org/pub/review/rev\\_des.htm](http://www.brookings.org/pub/review/rev_des.htm))
- Oliver, Susan (1993) *Lobby Groups, Think Tanks, The Universities and Media*, Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration, December, 75, 134-139
- Simonsen, Bill; Johnston, Nancy; Barnett, Russell (1996) *Attempting Non-Incremental Budget Change in Oregon: An Exercise in Policy Sharing*, American Review of Public Administration, June, 26(2), 231-250
- Singer, Jeffrey A, MD (1996) *Can America Escape the 'Ratchet Effect'?* The Goldwater Institute, 96(12), April 24, 1-3
- Starr, Graeme (1995) *Marketing the Government in Reform and Reversal* (ed Laffin and Painter) Macmillan Education Australia Pty Ltd, Melbourne
- Steelman, Todd A; Ascher, W (1997) *Public Involvement Methods in Natural Resource Policy Making: Advantages: Disadvantages, Trade-Offs*, Policy Sciences, 30, 71-90