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**CORPORATE IMAGE AND THE POLICE SERVICE:**

**an examination of Durham Constabulary**

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***Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Philosophy from the University of Durham***

*by*

***Anthony F. PARKER BA (Hons) FIMgt***

***November 1995***



**15 AUG 1996**

## **ABSTRACT**

The concept of corporate image has only relatively recently moved from the pages of design magazines to managerial, cultural and organisational texts.

The purpose of this research and subsequent thesis is to make a contribution to the knowledge of the concept of corporate image and in particular to establish any relevance to the arguably unique context of the police service.

A review of literature identified that there had been little, if any, academic research on corporate image; although some work of a descriptive and commercial nature was available on the design perspective of the subject. Furthermore, the impact or influence of corporate culture on the corporate image projected by organisations had not been explored.

The methodology of focus group research, using psychological predictive techniques, enabled a holistic, exploratory approach which was necessary due to the lack of theoretical underpinning of corporate image and the apparent interdisciplinary nature of the concept. The research establishes links between culture and the formation of corporate image. It then looks specifically at the culture of Durham Constabulary and its effect on the corporate image of the organisation.

The thesis shows that corporate image uses old concepts with new terminology. The term does, however, offer advantages in facilitating the management of several key influences on organisational effectiveness. Finally, it is argued that a corporate image programme could have importance for Durham Constabulary.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*I have worked on the research and the writing of this thesis for a long time and owe so much to so many people.*

*I am indebted to the officers of Durham Constabulary whose contribution and enthusiasm was central to my work. I consider myself fortunate to have such colleagues and friends.*

*My thanks also go to Durham University Business School and particularly Barry Witcher who accepted, welcomed and supported 'a policeman' in academia.*

*To my family; for the missed weekends, for the missed days, for the tolerance - I thank you.*

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*A.F. PARKER*

*Durham University Business School 1995*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction, Context and Overview

### a) *Introduction and context*

Initially, corporate image was confined to creating names and logos for organisations. This work, carried out generally by design consultancies, was concerned with visual style. The rationale from the designer's point of view was that visible aspects of an organisation could alter common public perceptions of it. Early academic work on the subject, *Martineau (1958)*, *Harris (1958)*, *Marston (1963)*, developed the concept to embrace all aspects of an organisation's image management.

Following a wave of corporate activity in recent years, involving mergers, amalgamations, decentralisation and reorganisation, the vogue for organisational name change, and the need to establish differentiation from competitors, has meant that corporate image has remained a lucrative source of business for design consultancies. Could the concept of corporate image, however, have any relevance to Durham Constabulary and the police service?

It is salient here to record the stimulus or prompt for the research effort and this subsequent thesis on corporate image and the police service. As a press and public relations officer for Durham Constabulary, monitoring local and national news media and responding to them, it became increasingly apparent that attitudes towards, and images portrayed of, the police





were radically changing.

As reported by *McQueen et al (1993)* the general impression, following widespread media publicity, is that the image of the police has been severely dented:

*"....The assessment of such views, however, remains largely unsystematic.....relying heavily on the media as an instrument for gauging public opinion...."* *p. 54*

Initially the catalyst to the research was to explore the applicability of marketing to the police service. *Kotler (1972)*, in what he termed '*the generic concept of marketing*', had described marketing as a relevant discipline for all organisations. However, the current use of some marketing strategies by the police service, for example, the formation of professional press and public relations departments, has been seen as:

*"....an invasion, an attempt to modify the police news in order to construct a more positive image...."* *Brogden (1982) p. 35*

A review of studies of marketing revealed an increasing concern for organisational identity and positive image making and the need for 'good reputation' in a search for ways to engender renewed public confidence in, and distinction between, organisations. While there has been an increasing acknowledgement of the importance of organisational identity and image, little empirical evidence appeared available to justify why this should be so. An introduction to a Harvard Business School Review publication on public relations provided

a further catalyst and the first focus for the research - a view that the concept of corporate image was much more complex than a marketing or public relations tool; it appeared to be interdisciplinary and related to the culture of organisations:

*"...Without a deeper understanding of the rationale behind it, companies can launch into public relations programs that are nothing more than image making... Top management must first understand the company's own internal identity and culture and then its place in society and the marketplace. Without this understanding or recognition that a strong internal identity is important, a company can never interact effectively with the outside world..."*

*Dickson (1984) p. 3*

Apart from the loose notion that images consist of something more than impressions or mental pictures it also became immediately apparent that it is unclear into which discipline, if any, this concept of corporate image comfortably sits - or is it a separate discipline or subject of its own? It is certainly discussed in the fields of marketing, advertising, public relations and organisational culture.

One of the major objectives for the research and this subsequent thesis was to discover the relevance corporate image has for a public, non-profit making organisation like Durham Constabulary.

Almost without exception the media and the police service itself has emphasised the need for good police/public relations:

*"...The greatest need of the Police is to regain the full confidence of the public...."*  
*The Independent (1989)*

*"...Without public confidence in the police and police credibility in the community we shall be able to achieve nothing at all...."*

*Hirst (1990) p. 8*

but is that the role of a corporate image programme ?

Although the general public has a fairly limited view of the police organisation, nevertheless as a service the police profile is high and, as a press officer, it appeared to the author that the media had a voracious appetite for police matters. Experience within Durham Constabulary of both junior and senior officers' views of the media drew this author to the conclusion that the organisation was both inordinately sensitive to criticism and aggressive in defence of the organisation.

Concern was, however, rising, both internally and externally, about an apparently increasing lack of confidence in the organisation. This was true both locally and nationally, *M.O.R.I. (1990)*, *Gorton Services (1991; 1992)*. It was, and is, no secret that the reputation and image of the police service in general is tarnished. Some commentators suggested that as the media created the public image more powerfully than anything else, a campaign was the very least that should be done to improve the image of the police and 'combat what the media presents'. It is in this policing context that this research was carried out.

**b) *Overview of corporate image***

From a historical perspective the idea of broadening the concept of corporate image has attracted considerable interest over the years. However, the direction of the comment falls into two categories; on the one hand enthusiastic articles and reports of the use and benefits of corporate image programmes, but on the other, pessimistic comments about how the definition and concept of corporate image has been broadened too far.

The narrow and popular view is that corporate image is a superficial, cosmetic notion based and focused upon visible manifestations of an organisation or its 'identity', that may or may not impact upon organisational effectiveness. This is encapsulated in the following statement:

*"....British designers have waxed fat on corporate image for the past thirty years. So you might, in an unkind moment, call it corpulent image...."*

*Glancey (1989) p. 26*

On the other hand the broader view is that corporate image, including components of identity, is strategically important - an essential tool of influence for an organisation's internal and external customers:

*"....The real purpose of an identity programme is to manage corporate communications in such a way as to transmit messages about the identity of an organisation in order to create an image that helps fulfil corporate*

While it appears that corporate image is a much larger idea than a public relations or advertiser's attempts to cosmetically improve perceptions of an organisation, there was initially insufficient evidence in the literature to support a clear view about how the concept could be applicable to the police organisation.

In the light of conflicting accounts of 'where to draw the line' on the boundaries of corporate image, it remained an open question as to exactly what the extent of the concept is; further research would also have to explore the principles and techniques concerned to discover if the domain includes public, non-profit organisations like the police.

Additionally, a review of the literature on corporate image revealed two distinct yet overlapping perspectives on the subject:

- ▶ the design view
- ▶ the cultural view.

The analysis of corporate image and its applicability to Durham Constabulary and the police service will be developed from these two perspectives throughout this thesis.

c) *Summary*

This thesis began with a number of questions; these were refined as the research proceeded, but it is worthwhile stating the principle ideas and initial questions here:

- ▶ what is the concept of corporate image?
- ▶ what is the relationship between corporate image and culture?
- ▶ does corporate image have an influence on corporate effectiveness?
- ▶ could the concept of corporate image have any relevance for the police service?

Initial questions above and the two perspectives also identified, (p. 6 ante), have particularly influenced the research effort and the thesis, and it is to these that the results and conclusions of the thesis will be addressed.

The preceding overview of the topic has outlined the undertaking and purview of the research in the unique context of the police service, and has also indicated the focus of the questions for the research.

The approach of the thesis is to examine the corporate image concept from two perspectives; specifically to explore the relationship between the culture of Durham Constabulary to the image projected by the organisation; and finally to evaluate whether corporate image has a functional relevance to the police service in general and Durham Constabulary in particular.

*d) Thesis content and structure*

The thesis starts in Chapter Two with an examination of the concepts of corporate image and culture. The definitions, development and theoretical underpinnings of the concepts are discussed in order to provide a basis, and explain the rationale, for this work.

In Chapter Three, to clarify the perspective of the thesis, the first of the two identified perspectives of corporate image is analysed; the design view. This chapter and Chapter Four will provide both the theoretical framework and the basis for the choice of research methodology.

Chapter Four analyses the second of the identified perspectives of corporate image; the cultural view.

Chapter Five is concerned with the choice of research methodology. In choosing, among several alternative research strategies, a programme of individual and focus group interviews with a cross section of police personnel, supplemented with other materials, represented the most appropriate and valid method in view of the generally exploratory nature of the research effort. This chapter discusses some difficulties in the method and describes how the process developed including the use of predictive techniques.

In Chapter Six the focus is on the corporate image and culture of the police service and Durham Constabulary in particular. The chapter examines the organisational context within which the fieldwork is carried out.

The findings of the research fieldwork from within Durham Constabulary, including both the design and cultural perspectives of corporate image, are reported in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Eight analyses the findings from the fieldwork and discusses them in terms of the initial and the research questions posed for the thesis, as well as an evaluation of them in relation to the other work in the area of corporate image highlighted in Chapters Three and Four.

Chapter Nine discusses four key influences identified by the research, in the light of the implications for existing knowledge on corporate image; and the contribution towards the understanding of how the concept may be applicable to the police service.

The main conclusions of the thesis are discussed in Chapter Ten and are reported as answers to the central questions initially posed and outlined for the research.

Chapter Eleven provides a reflexive account of the research process. This chapter makes explicit the role of the research methodology and the role of the author in the process and findings. The limitations of the work and areas where the work may be further developed in the future are also identified in the final chapter.



# CHAPTER TWO

## Corporate image and culture: the concepts

### a) *Introduction*

The principle ideas and initial questions for this research and thesis were given at Chapter One (p. 7). They were:

- ▶ what is the concept of corporate image?
- ▶ what is the relationship between corporate image and culture?
- ▶ does corporate image have an influence on corporate effectiveness?
- ▶ could the concept of corporate image have any relevance for the police service?

This chapter, in developing the answers to the above questions, is focused on an analysis of the definitions, development and theoretical underpinnings of the concepts of corporate image and corporate culture. It is found that the concepts are by no means always related within the literature on their specific subject and this is due, largely, to the very different disciplinary approaches of the writers of the subjects. The final sections of this chapter explore the relationship between corporate image and culture - the suggestion being that the strength and dominance of culture within any organisation has a powerful influence upon the image it projects both internally and externally. This, in turn, will influence corporate

effectiveness.

**b) Corporate Image - the development of the concept**

The concept of corporate image appears to have been born in the 1950's although there is no one person to whom the idea has been attributed.

The views advanced by **Boulding (1956)** regarding image have been acknowledged by virtually every image theorist who has written since. His philosophical view is that image is built up as a result of all past experience of the possessor of the image, and that image determines the current behaviour of a person towards any organisation:

*"...Images can only be compared with images. They can never be compared with outside reality.... for any individual organism or organisation, there are no such things as 'facts'. There are only messages filtered through a changeable value system...."* *p. 31*

From this notion of the meaning of the term corporate image **Martineau (1958)** provided a more systematic approach to the concept. He attempted for the first time to mould the term into a clear, distinctive form identifying the necessity for management to take the function of image seriously and suggesting seven key '*publics*' to which any company must address itself:- stockholders, consumers, potential customers, employees, vendors, suppliers, and neighbours. He named these publics '*hidden perceivers*' each of which looked at the corporate image from behind '*a different set of lenses*'.

The complexity of the concept was also acknowledged by *Harris (1958)* and he stressed the diversity of the idea stating that it was relevant to marketing, advertising and public relations:

*"....A corporate image is undoubtedly the most complex of all marketing images. It is the image of the individual corporation....created in the minds of consumers by total corporate advertising and public relations as well as by the company's individual brands, advertising, packaging, value and the consumer's actual knowledge and/or experience with the company's brands or services...."* *p. 335*

Further systematic evaluation of corporate image was made by *Marston (1963)* who formed the opinion that the size of the organisation does not ensure a favourable image, but better known companies are almost always more favourably known. This, at the very least, must be regarded as an oversimplification, for example what of the profile and image of British Rail or British Nuclear Fuels? British Rail and British Nuclear Fuels are certainly well known but their respective images would not, in general popular terms, be regarded as 'favourable'. However, Marston also recognised that in the area of corporate image too much emphasis was concentrated on consumer opinion when in fact:

*"....employee opinion contributes greatly to company reputation...."* *p. 5*

The concept of corporate image was developing into the area of culture of organisations.

Sophisticated efforts of advertising and marketing in the consumer field then follows a logical development from a conscious effort to create a distinctive and positive brand identity and image, through attempts to create an identity and image for whole product areas, to a perception that there are non price components of an organisation's operation which are vital factors in creating a total image of the organisation. This has led to the use of terms of corporate identity, corporate image, and corporate personality. Some of these concepts are on occasions used more or less interchangeably. The following section will critically review, and attempt to clarify and define, the meaning of corporate image for use throughout this thesis.

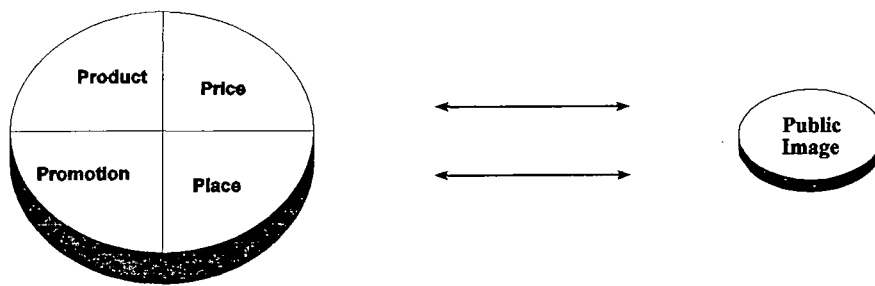
*c) Corporate Image - the concept and definitions*

Corporate image is a perception. Perceptions derive from attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of individuals. In much the same way as a 'fact' is something that is regarded as being true and having a reality, corporate image is an impression on which basis assumptions are made about an organisation. The assumption about the organisation may be false but it will have been valid to the individual as their 'reality'. This illustrates some of the complexity of the subject.

The Wolff Olins company have been involved as a design consultancy on some of the most prestigious corporate identity programmes in this country including Prudential, I.C.I., Midland Bank, B.O.C., British Telecom and Eurotunnel. The founder of the company Wally Olins is also a distinguished author and leading academic in the field of corporate identity. He has outlined some differences in the terms of corporate identity, image and personality.

He states the differences are distinct; rather than trivial, pedantic or semantic, (*Olins 1978*). In short, he described identity as the part of the image that can be overtly identified, for example, the organisation's signs, logo, symbol and colour. The corporate personality and the corporate culture are closely allied as the norms, dominant values, rules, philosophy, feeling or climate of the organisation. Finally, the corporate image is the mental composite of experiences, recollections, and impressions - a kind of stereotype simplification of what the public believes the organisation is. Implicit in the last definition is that images will vary from person to person; and of equal importance one organisation will have several images held both at an individual and collective level - a return to the philosophy of Boulding some twenty years before. However, while Olins states the differences in the definitions are distinct he, in fact, confuses the terms, (pp. 15-16 post).

Certainly organisational identity and image can be seen as a recent addition to any marketing strategy, regardless of whether for a profit organisation or not. *Hartley (1986)* emphasised that although marketing has been viewed as manipulating the 'four P's', the elements of the so called marketing mix; a further or additional 'P' deserves consideration as another element of the marketing mix - that of a firm's public image - its reputation and how its product and/or services are perceived:



*Figure 1 "A firms marketing mix", Hartley (p. 27)*

However, while the identity of a firm, in terms of corporate mark or logo, is a means of communicating with target audiences and therefore has a role to play in marketing, a distinction should here be drawn between an image and an identity. Hartley's use of the term public image as a fifth 'P' should not be confused with corporate image. Public image in the sense used by Hartley is only one component of an overall corporate image. In the author's view corporate identity is also simply that; a part of overall corporate image.

The literature is very unclear in attempting to distinguish between corporate identity and corporate image. The vagueness of the definitions of corporate identity and image as the concepts have developed makes them almost cryptic. Other authors have highlighted the necessity to clarify the terms and make less recondite the seemingly incomprehensible jargon associated with the subjects. For example, *Topalian (1984)*, *Abratt (1989)* and *Ind (1990)* refer to the need to manage and clarify these terms and avoid 'visual overstatements'.

As previously stated, and subsequently, *Olins (1994)* himself had added to the confusion regarding these definitions. He appears to have widened his initial focus on design and visual

cues to identity by pointing out that environment, behaviour and culture are now becoming more significant factors in identity (note; not image). He further clouds the issue by use of terminology which does nothing to illuminate the debate. For example he refers to;

*"....corporate personality...., corporate purpose...., corporate activity...., corporate spirit...., corporate affairs...., corporate style...., corporate life...., corporate culture...."*

*Olins (1994) pp. 7 - 34*

Additionally, this confusion or lack of clarity of terms is compounded and illustrated in his recent explanation of what may occur if visual identity of an organisation is not managed:

*"....Every company has an identity, whether it recognises it or not, and the real question that needs to be faced is whether the organisation seeks to control that identity, or whether it allows the identity to control it, so that it has entirely different images with all its different audiences...."*

*p. 35 op. cit.*

To restate, it is the view of the author that corporate identity is that part of a company or organisation that can be seen, for example, buildings, vehicles, logo, stationery and advertising. It is a visible manifestation. However, corporate image is an overall perception of a company or organisation based upon many factors including reputation, experience or impressions.

Put simply, all organisations have an image or images. Image is intangible, often an

oversimplification or stereotype, and yet is a convenient and helpful way to visualise ideas about the organisation. But, given the confusion regarding the term outlined in this chapter, can corporate image be precisely defined?

It was found that certain components of corporate image have been consistently identified for over thirty years. For example, image is:

*"....the net result of the interaction of all the experiences, beliefs, feelings and knowledge that people have about a company...."*

*Bevis (1967) p. 34*

*"....the overall mental picture of an organisation selectively perceived as a net result of an individual's experiences, beliefs, recollections, ideas and impressions of the organisation...."*

*Olins (1978) p. 62*

*"....represents the sum of beliefs, attitudes and impressions that a person or group has....the impressions may be true or false, real or imagined...."*

*Barich & Kotler (1991) p. 95*

*"....The totality of all the impressions that a company makes on all its audiences is often called its image...."*

*Olins (1994) p. 35*

For the purpose of clarity a working definition of corporate image, from which all subsequent references will be based in this thesis, is now given. Corporate image is:



*a complex, intangible constellation of images of an organisation, based upon perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of that organisation whether held by internal or external observers.*

The critical points to note are that corporate image is not tangible. The concept is also an abstraction, a hypothetical construct of which there is no one absolute and correct meaning.

It is multi-dimensional. It can be seen, in psychological terms, to have three aspects:

- ▶ an *affective* aspect - it embodies positive or negative feelings about the subject in question;
- ▶ a *cognitive* aspect - beliefs or ideas about the subject; and
- ▶ a *conative* aspect - a tendency to behave in a particular way towards the subject.

While these points illustrate the complexity of the subject area, in order to describe and record corporate image, the definition given on above will clarify usage throughout this thesis. The distinction between corporate identity and image will be further explored in subsequent chapters as it also illustrates the design and cultural perspectives on the subject which were mentioned earlier in Chapter One, (p. 6 ante).

#### **d) *Corporate Image - the component elements***

To address the questions raised in the introduction and to guide the development of the thesis a synthesis of corporate image components or elements in the form of a model is

provided in the following section. This is necessary not only for the reasons just stated but because before attempting to qualify the image of the police and Durham Constabulary - and its effect on service delivery - it is necessary to gain some understanding of how corporate image is formed.

Given the fragmentation of theory and research in the area of corporate image, the view was taken that a simple eclecticism - in the sense of setting out each approach in turn and analysing each in turn - was not sufficient. In particular, because of the holistic approach that was adopted to corporate image throughout this thesis, a multiple perspective approach was necessary. Having adopted a thematic structure, with its own inherent logical progression, the author first focused on the origins, the sources of image, and then the development which progressively was seen as a fusion and interaction of many influences.

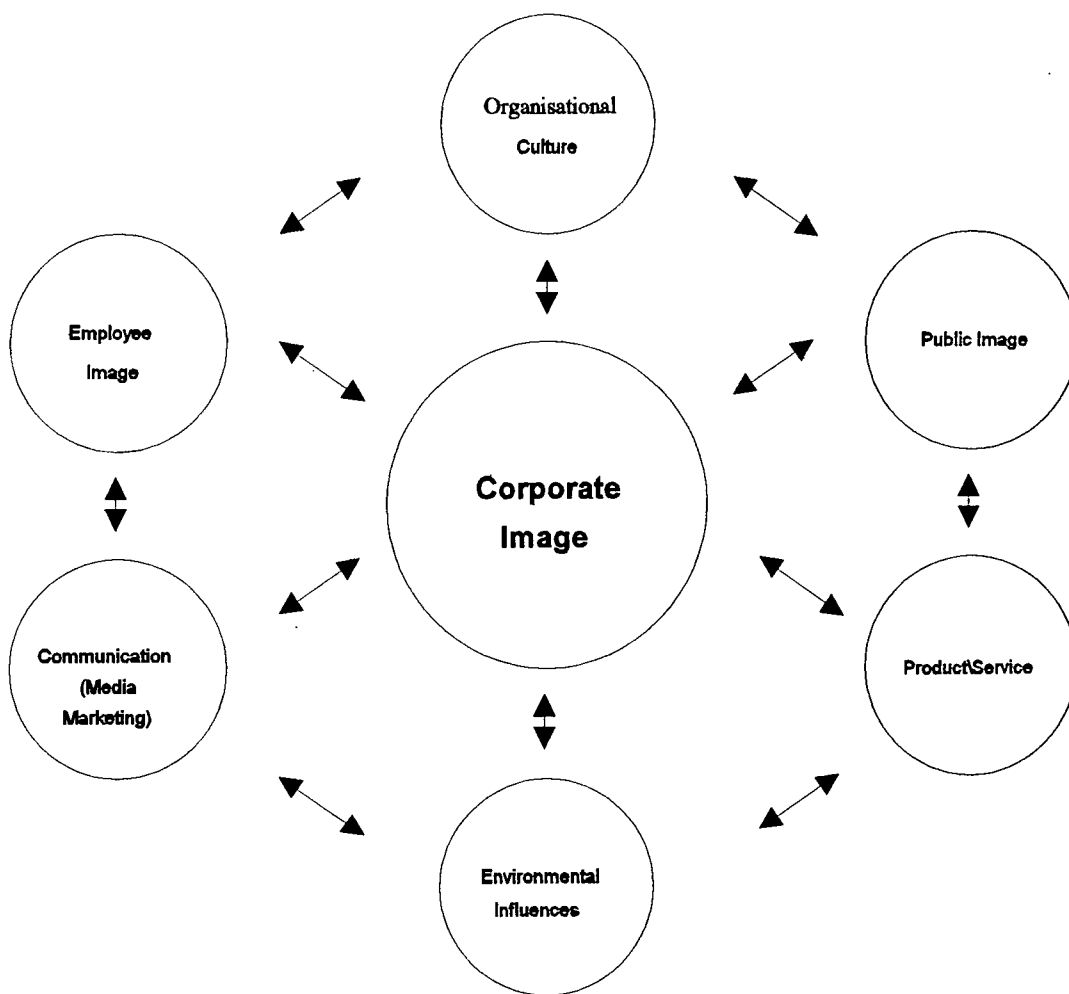
The model formed from the synthesis consists of critical elements of the process identified from previous authors, for example, *Berkwitt (1970)*, *Bernstein (1985)*, *Boulding (1956)*, *Dear (1989)*, *Dowling (1986)*, *Ind (1990)*, *Kennedy (1977)*, *Martineau (1958)*, *Olins (1978;1984)* and *Simpson (1987)*.

Specifically the work of *Kennedy (1977)* and *Dowling (1986)* is acknowledged as providing a thematic structure to the model. Both authors have researched the corporate image formation process, its management and the effects. Kennedy and Dowling capture the interdisciplinary focus of corporate image and a certain commonality of characteristics contained within the subject area. Kennedy in particular analyses over twenty definitions of corporate image and lists them chronologically in 'Nurturing Corporate Images' so that

changing thoughts and beliefs about corporate image can be assessed.

It is not always possible to achieve with any assurance of validity a model which perfectly illustrates the subject area. Nevertheless, this one provides a useful framework to proceed with an analysis of the corporate image of the police service and its implications.

The model is illustrated below:



*Figure 2 The components of corporate image*

Each of the critical components is associated and interactive. For example, an external environmental influence such as a change in interest rates or exchange rates could affect product delivery which in turn may influence customer satisfaction. Or a media article could affect the morale of the workforce which in turn may affect productivity and efficiency. The components relate to both factual and interpreted or even imaginary qualities of the organisation.

The terms used in this synthesis are defined in the following way:

### **Public Image**

In the context of this work means the publics or groups with no direct experience of the organisation who may share a 'what everybody knows' stereotype of the organisation. It is usually a broad, generalised image rather than a sharp detailed picture.

### **Product/Service**

It is an 'evaluated' image from previous product/service usage either by the user or by hearsay which will be a primary influence on corporate image. It includes product, service, price, quality, range, after-sales service and similar contact with the organisation.

### **Environment**

This will include all the environmental influences such as government policies, legislation, the prevailing economy, pressure groups and competitors' actions.

### *Communication (media/marketing)*

In the context of this work means news reporting as well as paid for promotion/advertising.

It also includes communication addressed to internal groups.

### *Employee Image*

This is the way employees experience and see the organisation, the morale of the workforce and their perceptions of the organisation's policies - but only as an employee not in relation to products or services.

### *Organisational culture*

The taken for granted norms, values, rules and assumptions of an organisation. This is sometimes taught to or learned by new employees as a valid way to perceive the organisation.

It should be noted that three components of the synthesis are closely aligned to a design perspective i.e. public image, communication and environment; and three elements relate to cultural influences on corporate image i.e. product/service, employee image and culture. These will be further addressed later in the thesis.

#### *e) Corporate image - influence*

While much has been claimed for corporate image, the literature is heavily weighted to a design perspective, and, as such, is descriptive and anecdotal, with little empirical work on the subject. This is because the evolution of corporate image was as a function of public

relations and design consultancies - commercially 'selling' the idea that changing outward perceptions of organisations by name and logo changes was good business practice.

Even given the descriptive nature of the commentary there has also been arguments over the importance of corporate image. *Boorstin* as early as *1961* argued that image was replacing reality, that is, not based on objective facts - but based on subjective interpretation of information; that advertisers were not deceivers of the public, more acolytes of the image - elaborating it not only because image sells but also because, '*image is what the public wants to buy*'.

*Berkwitt (1970)* more succinctly asks:

*"....What the hell is image?.... It's the reflection of either a poor company or a good company, nothing else...."* *p. 19*

The Oxford dictionary definition of image is 'a representation or optical reproduction of a thing'. It has, however, to some commentators come to mean falsehood or fabrication rather than a representation or reproduction of reality of the thing. Or as *Bernstein (1985)* refers:

*"....it implies a degree of falseness insofar as the reality rarely matches up to the image...."* *p. 32*

This view can again be regarded as oversimplification. The 'reality' is a derivative of the perception of the individual and can be influenced by many factors including marketing and

service. If the image is a mental picture or impression, possibly even a simile or metaphor, it may not be based upon an objective, valid appraisal of an object or organisation. It could in many instances be based on the views of others, rather than as a direct result or knowledge of the organisation.

The use of a product or service therefore, of which an individual has already formed an image, may result in an evaluation of the product or service which does not match their initial thoughts. This does not, of course, mean that the evaluation is entirely objective. Corporate image is subjective.

The term corporate image has also become closely allied to the use of logos or company symbols - this being due, in the main, to the work on identity by designers. This too has attracted criticism, by the media and investors into organisations, on corporations spending huge sums of money on the, *'tiniest changes to company logos as bosses delight in tinkering with famous designs'* (*Sunday Times 30.1.89*).

This has also been described as 'the latest corporate craze'. Research does, however, indicate that people do use images to make judgements about realities, and for the past two decades Market and Opinion Research International has found that two Britons in three believe that:

*"....A company that has a good reputation would not sell poor quality products...."*

*M. O. R. I. (1989) p. 12*

The good reputation may, or may not, of course, be a true reflection of the reality.

While the approach of specialist writers such as Kennedy, Dowling, Olins and Ind is useful in terms of understanding the derivation of corporate image, there is little evidence that the link between image and culture has been fully explored. There appears overall to be a lack of theoretical understanding of corporate image. There is no holistic concept. Only small specialist areas looking at the subject in parts. The relationship between corporate image and culture - that which is currently understood - will be explored in the next section.

#### *f) Corporate Culture - definitions*

Although it is true that the relationship between corporate image and corporate culture has not been fully investigated, some link between the two has been acknowledged. For example, articles on image by *Martineau (1958)*, *Kennedy (1977)*, *Dowling (1986)*, and *Messikomer (1987)* all also contain references to culture and allude to the significant influence it has on corporate image. The next section will analyse what is meant by the term corporate or organisational culture.

The word culture has as many meanings and definitions as image. From an initial meaning derived from the idea of cultivation, culture can now generally signify any of the different ways of life practised by groups of people. In a similar way to corporate image it is only relatively recently that the concept has been broadened further to include organisations. The different definitions of corporate culture, not to mention the different methods of determining what it is and the different standards of evaluating how it affects organisations can be confusing. However, research has indicated that the idea of organisations having



cultures is realistic, even though to some it is an abstract term incapable of precise definition, and that it does appear to have certain central characteristics which are generally accepted. **Robbins (1978)** believes that organisational culture has a central theme which is a system of 'shared meaning' and **Morgan (1986)** argues that it is: *'patterns of interaction - including language, images, themes and daily rituals of employees'*, p. (156).

Schein is an influential, respected author on organisational culture. (He is the Sloan Fellows professor of Management at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his main research activities have been in the field of managerial development and organisational culture. Schein's book *Organisational Psychology* (1965); 3rd edition (1980) led to a seminal series on organisational development).

In Schein's view some of the common definitions of organisational culture such as *'the norms that evolve in working groups'*, **Homans (1950)**, *'observed behavioural regularities'*, **Goffman (1959,1967)**; **Van Maanen (1979)**, *'the feeling or climate that is conveyed in an organisation'*, **Taguiri and Latwin (1968)**, *'the dominant values espoused by the organisation'*, **Deal and Kennedy (1982)**, or *'the philosophy that guides an organisations policy'*, **Ouchi (1981)**; **Pascale and Athos (1981)** all merely reflect the culture but none are the essence of culture. He argues that culture is:

*"....the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic 'taken for granted' fashion an organisation's view of itself and its environment...."*

*Schein (1985) p. 106*

It should also be stressed that although the term is used in a general way to refer to a whole corporate entity there will be many different cultures within the same organisation - a management culture, worker culture, departmental culture, divisional culture and so on - often referred to as subcultures.

g) *Corporate culture - influence*

At a basic level some corporate image determinants are as *Dowling (1986)* suggests:

*"....the impressions left by people staffing such front line jobs as salespeople, receptionists, and switchboard operators who are often the first contact a customer makes with a business...."* *p. 110*

Given the significance of the role of these employees it appears that a management function should be to attempt to manage a corporate culture which is consistent and positive.

*"....Experience of a company, particularly in the industrial and service sectors will rely heavily upon personal contact with employees. Acknowledging that employees are an active source of information, steps are needed to ensure that information, and hence the image which they transmit, is compatible with the way in which top management wish the company to be seen...."* *Kennedy (1977) p. 121*

For example, if members of any organisation hold widely divergent concepts of what they

are supposed to be or do, this culture can influence behaviour.

It is now generally agreed that corporate culture has a powerful impact on organisations, particularly on organisational behaviour, for example, *Schein (1968; 1985); Ouchi (1981); Pascale and Athos (1981); Deal and Kennedy (1982); Sathe (1983)* and *Morgan (1986)*. Indeed *Sathe (1983)* describes its influence as a:

*"....pervasive role in organisational life...."*

*p. 9*

This recognition has led to a proliferation of strategies to attempt to shape or manage culture by executives and managers espousing the ideals of their own organisation in the form of vision or mission statements or company philosophy.

*Morgan (1986)* too reaffirms several strengths of corporate culture. One follows the theme of *Robbins (1978)* mentioned above, that of a shared system of meaning providing a new focus and avenue for the creation of organised action, others being that it aids understanding of organisational change, and directs attention to the symbolic significance of rational aspects of organisational practices. This ability of corporate culture to help describe many organisational phenomena is one of its most important values to both leadership and worker assisting in both the way of thinking about the organisation and the interpretation of its role in the larger environment.

*Schein (1985)* indicates that corporate culture is even more powerful and influential than so far suggested, reasoning that it must be better understood because it has:

*"...dynamic consequences... being patterned, potent and deeply embedded  
in thoughts, perceptions and feelings...."* *p. 4*

In an analysis of organisational strategy *Brandt (1981)* argues that every organisation inevitably goes through a developmental sequence, in which the sixth and final stage involves the '*cultivation*' of corporate culture. He further argues that the organisations should become conscious of this process and actively manage it.

Although *Schein (op. cit.)* questions whether it is possible to manage corporate culture he states that the consequences of it are real and that it is these consequences which must be managed. The one thing which is crucial to the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation is a consensus on internal and external judgements of performance. He further asserts that lack of agreement either internally by the workforce or externally by its publics on how to judge success can be a major source of difficulty in improving performance. While it may be true that corporate culture can not be strictly controlled it must be possible to manage, influence or shape it.

Implicit in much of the work on culture is that it is a dominant influence on performance. It should not, however, be assumed that strong or dominant cultures secure effectiveness and excellence for the organisation. *Sathe (1983)* acknowledges that culture has a profound influence on organisational life but states that it is, '*both an asset and a liability*', (p. 17)

This is because while shared beliefs, values and norms can aid communication and

commitment, the culture can become a liability if those shared beliefs and values are not in keeping with the organisation's needs or goals. Nor is everyone, of course, fully committed to the organisation in which they work. Again the research for this thesis focuses on gaining an understanding of the mix of potentially conflicting orientations and cultures within Durham Constabulary and the effect this has on the organisation's corporate image.

*h) Corporate culture - effect on image*

While there are some research accounts of the effect of culture on image, the work is still limited. In an empirical study by *Badovick and Beatty (1988)* to measure the impact on marketing of shared organisational values, it was found that values that might have assisted in effective marketing strategy implementation were not shared as strongly as organisational values were. Therefore, it is argued by them, organisational values should be given greater consideration in marketing strategy implementation. Particularly in services' marketing it is the case that because there is no product, there is an increase in importance of social contact between employees and customers. A lack of a 'customer first' philosophy or culture may therefore adversely affect marketing the organisation's services. *Parasuraman (1987)* describes such cultures as '*a prerequisite if service companies are to excel in the market place*', (p. 40).

At a Conference Board meeting in 1987 called to explore the role of strategic plans in corporate image many presenters stressed that corporate strategy must precede corporate image programmes. Again the confusion persists over terminology, is it image or identity? As an introduction to the report it is stated:

*"....Creating a new corporate identity requires much more than designing a new logo or printing the company stationery in new colours. A corporate identity programme is a set of strategic business decisions reflected in the physical artefacts of the corporation, from business cards to trucks, and in every communication the company distributes, from its internal newsletters to its ads and annual reports...."*

*Simpson (1987) p. 1*

*Uehling (1987)* refers to a potentially dangerous perception gap between corporate 'reality' and corporate image. He regards corporate image as a vital oversimplification of the corporation and, *'the single most important element of the corporations unique qualities'*, p.(16), while emphasising the need for management of culture in the form of internal and external key communications.

*McDougal (1987)* in describing the underlying strategic decisions pertinent to the change of the Harlem Savings Bank to the Apple Bank stated:

*"....We realised that this wasn't just a matter of taking down one sign and putting up another. What we were doing was changing the institution and its culture...."*

*p. 13*

Thus stressing that corporate image is not a cosmetic change in identity. It is in marked contrast to the simplistic view that changing an identity will impact upon the corporate image of the organisation. *Simpson (1987)* sums up the identified theme by acknowledging

a link between corporate image and culture;

*"...changing the corporate identity also means understanding and changing the corporate culture...."* p. 1

indicating that the first step toward getting employee support is to improve the communications and environment of the organisation. The communication and environment are part of the culture of the organisation and, as this work will investigate, may form also a large part of the corporate image of the organisation.

Behaviour of individuals within an organisation has been identified for many decades as a possible manifestation of the culture of that organisation, *Corey (1937)*, *Fishbein (1966)*, *Green (1968)*. The difficulty, acknowledged by many psychologists from *Wicker (1969)*, and *Deutscher (1966)* in earlier studies, to *Myers (1993)* and *Argyll (1994)*, is that studying verbally expressed attitudes, values or beliefs in themselves may not be fully reflected in actions or overt behaviour. There are complex relations between attitudes and behaviour. Although a number of factors in addition to attitudes have been suggested as influences upon overt behaviours, *Fishbein (op. cit.)* has combined the factors into a systematic formulation. According to *Fishbein:*

*"....There are three kinds of variables that function as the basic determinants of behaviour; 1. Attitudes towards the behaviour 2. Normative beliefs (both personal and social) 3. Motivation to comply with norms...."* p. 57

The first component, attitudes towards behaviour, is person or individual centred. In other words it may vary from person to person. The other components are strong 'external' influences which are more relative to the culture, or sub cultures, in organisations. It is those group norms and beliefs held within Durham Constabulary, as well as group attitudes which will be investigated during this research.

Culture, in terms of how it influences the behaviour of individuals within an organisation, particularly a service organisation such as the police reliant upon personal contact between employees and customers, may therefore be one of the components and determinants of that organisation's corporate image. This too will be the subject of the research.

*i) Summary of the concepts of corporate image and culture*

Corporate image is an individual and collective perception of an organisation. The perception derives and is based upon many factors, including reputation, experience, impressions, attitudes and beliefs.

Corporate image first developed in the fields of marketing, advertising and public relations. The concept was initially driven by a design perspective, with much emphasis being placed by design consultancies on the importance of visible cues to an organisation.

Furthermore, there is, and has been, much confusion generated by misuse of and lack of clarity with the terms corporate image and corporate identity.



However, critical elements of the components of corporate image have now been established, including the importance of internal organisational communication and culture. There is little evidence that the link between corporate image and culture has been fully explored.

The main theme being advanced by an examination of the previous review of literature, and one of the basic tenets of this thesis, is that for a corporate image to be both positive and enduring there must be a recognition of the relationship between image and culture - the culture communicating consistent facts about the organisation - not superficial identity promotion. A dominant corporate culture should express the core values of the majority of the organisations' members; if organisations have no dominant culture but are comprised of numerous subcultures, the influence of the culture on corporate effectiveness is far more ambiguous.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Identity hyperopia: just another unappealing layer of jargon?

### a) *Introduction*

A balanced examination of the literature has revealed that the subject of corporate image is inter-disciplinary. It is, of course, possible to pick out different elements from the broad review and list them in a variety of ways. However, the review points to two logical, yet distinct overlapping perspectives of corporate image.

From all of the perspectives taken there can be found two major views which can be applied to corporate image:

- ▶ the design view
- ▶ the cultural view.

One of the main issues immediately apparent was the differing approaches to corporate image taken by different authors, and more particularly the different focal points adopted. However, both the design and cultural perspectives are essential to an understanding of the topic of research - corporate image. They also encompass other views such as '*Total Quality*' and '*Internal Marketing*' which assist in discovering the true nature of corporate

image. From both of the perspectives of design and culture, examples of research or corporate image programmes, including from each view of the police, suggest that there is a link between corporate image and corporate culture; that image is not superficial but functional in terms of its impact on organisational effectiveness; and that corporate culture has a strong influence on the image projected by the organisation.

This chapter will analyse the first of the two major views; the design perspective. The next chapter will address the cultural view and both will be linked to the identified components of corporate image, (Chapter Two p. 20 ante).

***b) Corporate image: cause and effect relationships***

It is evident that corporate image can influence such factors as attitudes to organisations and, to some extent, broader areas of corporate culture and corporate effectiveness. Thus managers, it has been suggested, could well benefit from giving careful attention to what and how they communicate with internal and external audiences. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest a relationship between corporate image and corporate culture which influences corporate effectiveness. The particular mechanics and linkages in this relationship may not be direct, but at least an indirect relationship is acknowledged, (Chapter Two pp. 25-26 ante). In this connection, the strongest message that emerges from the literature to date is the view that corporate image processes need to be analysed and understood in the particular context within which they occur, (Chapter Two op cit). Thus, what works or happens in one corporate image context, may not necessarily work the same way in another context.

It has been stated that the police service may be a unique context. For example, what other organisation would categorise its '*customers*' in the following way:

- "... *i*     *Victims*
- ii*    *Suspects*
- iii*   *Callers*
- iv*    *Participative users*
- v*     *Other users ...."*

*Home Office Circular 10.9.91*

As a serving officer for over 20 years the author was aware that the emphasis on the '*customer*' lay primarily with suspects, and to some extent victims, but it is pertinent that even following several quality of service initiatives the concept of the '*internal customer*', i.e. all employees of the police service, is prominent by its absence in the above Circular.

A tentative proposition at this stage is that if the corporate image of an organisation is less than favourable, the result will have a negative influence on organisational effectiveness. Conversely, a favourable corporate image will have a positive influence on organisational effectiveness. This research involves more than looking at the corporate image of Durham Constabulary, or the culture, or indeed the effectiveness of the police service but looks at exploring the relationship between them.

As suggested this link between the influences on corporate image proposes a set of cause-effect relationships. This raises several important theoretical as well as operational

issues surrounding causal-inference thinking. These need to be addressed briefly before proceeding to the analysis of corporate image from a design perspective.

At an intuitive level, the notion of causality is quite straightforward. For example, the company who managed a *'positive'* corporate image would necessarily be efficient and have certain attributes. However, at a more complex physiological level, cause-effect relationships are increasingly subjective and difficult to measure in an unbiased, objective, meaningful way.

It may be, in principle, possible to develop a conceptually tight causal model, but to provide incontestable evidence in support of it is another matter. The difficulties of developing and attempting to test a causal model in this research are recognised. Nevertheless, thinking in causal terms can help to increase understanding and in turn may assist in improving simplified models of reality. As *Blalock (1964)* has observed:

*"....One admits that causal thinking belongs completely on a theoretical level and that causal laws can never be demonstrated on an empirical level. But this does not mean that it is not helpful to think causally and to develop causal models that have implications that are directly testable...."*

*p. 42*

Controlled laboratory experimental designs with manipulation of independent variables come closest to achieving the ideal of *'proof'* of cause-effect relationships. The dynamics of the work setting and particularly in the police service, may be very different from those of the

laboratory context. This is particularly pertinent for this research which is work in the organisational context.

The current state of knowledge about corporate image processes in organisations, is as yet very limited. Researchers are still wrestling with the broad questions about what it is that should be understood better and therefore a demonstrably valid methodology is essential. Apart from conceptual questions about inferring cause and effect, a number of operational methodological issues also require attention, such as reliability and validity of the research. The research strategy that underpins this present work is a qualitative focus group research survey approach. This will be fully discussed in Chapter Five.

There are many descriptions of the concept labelled corporate image, but few explanations of it. Although descriptive and explanatory functions of any concept are intrinsically interwoven, it is worth distinguishing between them. While almost every concept usually provides both, its descriptive and explanatory powers may not necessarily be equivalent. The central question for this research is to what extent any of these approaches explain corporate image and particularly what effect corporate culture has on corporate effectiveness.

*c) Overview of corporate image from the design perspective*

This perspective on corporate image covers the elements or influences outlined in the model from Chapter Two, (p. 20 ante) of public image, environment and communication. A large body of work is concerned with the description of corporate image from the designer's point of view. It will be seen later in this chapter however, that this perspective includes *'internal*

*marketing*' and *'total quality'* views. Corporate image as a distinct field of study appears to have emerged largely from this design perspective as designers offer much anecdotal literature on the subject.

Because image is intangible, subjective and on occasions difficult to quantify it becomes problematic to deal with it in empirical terms. There is little doubt that image can identify ownership and draw distinctions or differences of a qualitative nature from other services or products. Good internal and external communication has been a necessary organisational objective in most companies for decades and the design perspective emphasises how corporate image programmes can assist in this field.

Is corporate image then just an instrument or tool to use to improve communication - or simply new words to describe a management phenomenon? Or is it a new discrete or distinct theory of science? (Communications, after all, are much more than a name, a logo or registered trade mark.)

One of the leading designers in the field and author of standard texts on corporate identity and image argues that the concepts are all-embracing:

*"....The process usually described as corporate identity consists of the explicit management of some or all of the ways in which a company's activities are perceived....Changing a corporate identity is a profound step. It is one of the moments in an organisation's life when it stands back and looks at what it is, how it became like that and what it is going to do and*

Again criticism must be made of the terminology used by Olins (see also Chapter 2 pp.15-16 ante). Implicit in his argument because of his use of 'identity' is that perceptions of an organisation are formed through use of visual ie. identity cues. While, undoubtedly, some perceptions are based upon what is tangible and seen, it is somewhat of an overstatement, or at the very least a generalisation, to claim that all perceptions are defined by identity. Olins does acknowledge that how an organisation '*behaves*' both internally and externally, especially in a service industry such as the police, is a significant component of the organisations' identity but continually emphasises the '*visible and tangible*', *Olins (1994) p. 7*. In the view of this author perceptions gained from organisational behaviour, for example through service usage, are more correctly influences on corporate image not identity.

The assumptions underlying a concept are not necessarily easy to determine. They are not always made explicit nor are they necessarily apparent to proponents of the concept concerned. For example, it is little more than efficient management to 'stand back and look at' how an organisation is and 'what its going to do' as *Olins* refers (*op. cit*). It does not require a change in corporate identity to facilitate the process. Some authors have attempted to define concepts carefully and systematically and make clear the principles. Others develop them in a more haphazard fashion, often embedding them in general issues or case studies. Designers, including Olins, are definitely in the latter category.

Corporate image by its very nature permits no unequivocal definition or quantification of



the processes it may denote, still less of the complex interactions it may operate. But it is worthwhile analysing the views and work of Olins - not least because his work encompasses commissioned corporate identity programmes for I.C.I. and the Metropolitan Police.

In a dismissive comment on Olins, *Lycett (1988)* described the corporate identity specialist thus:

*"....Wolff Olins are an eighties phenomenon, a latterday exponent of the old nanny's adage that first impressions count...."* p. 13

Olins has, nonetheless, been involved in major redesign projects of corporate identity for some of the largest and most profitable organisations in Europe. For example, Prudential, I.C.I., British Telecom, B.O.C. and the channel tunnel company Eurotunnel.

In the introduction to one of his standard works on corporate identity Olins acknowledges, in a series of rhetorical questions, the debate which surrounds the subject:

*"....Are its proponents claiming too much for it? Is it simply a superficial whitewash - a kind of cosmetic? Is it merely a tool of marketing or something rather bigger? Does it work?...."* Olins(1984) p. 3

To answer some of these questions a review of the major sections of Olins' work will be examined with reference to other work in the field. This analysis will then be further

illustrated and concluded from the two previously mentioned corporate identity programmes at I.C.I. and the Metropolitan Police.

In general terms Olins describes corporate identity as a process of management on the way an organisation is perceived. His description, both explicitly and implicitly, conveys that the phenomenon is more than an outward picture. It must show inner values and convictions so that everyone that interfaces with the organisation directs positive attention towards it. The visual communication is an expression of the organisation's philosophy and culture, its abilities and goals.

The specific sections of his work which provide both a focus for a critical analysis of corporate image from a design perspective are as follows:

- ▶ *definition of what corporate image is*
- ▶ *what the aims of corporate image are*
- ▶ *the rationale for the introduction of a programme*
- ▶ *how to introduce and implement corporate image*
- ▶ *the intended benefits of corporate image.*

Each will be discussed in turn.

- ▶ *Definition of corporate image*

As stated in Chapter Two, (pp. 12-13 ante), sophisticated efforts of advertising and

marketing in the consumer field appear to have followed a logical development from efforts to create a distinctive and positive brand image, through attempts to create an image for whole product areas, to creating a total corporate image of an organisation.

*Olins (1978)* has outlined his perception of the differences in the terms of corporate image, corporate identity, brand and product images which he states are distinct rather than trivial, pedantic or semantic, and these were described in Chapter Two, (p. 14 ante). In short the following is his definition of corporate image:

*"...Corporate image is the overall mental picture of an organisation selectively perceived as a net result of an individual's experiences, beliefs, recollections ideas and impressions of the organisation...."* p. 5

There are, of course, numerous other definitions of corporate image, (Chapter 2 p. 17 ante). More recent definitions, however, offer a more simplistic definition of the concept than Olins. It is:

*"...The picture a company's audiences have of it..."*

*Ind (1990) p. 21*

*"...The way people view the whole corporation...."*

*Barich and Kotler (1991) p. 96*

To summarise: it is suggested here that it is not essential to the understanding of the term corporate image that some of the more minute differences in definition need to be analysed.

There are, however, discrete distinctions which need to be drawn between *'identity'* and *'image'* as defined by Olins - in that identity can be regarded as that part of an image which is seen; therefore throughout this thesis when the distinction needs to be emphasised for purposes of clarity, the two terms will be explained in the context in which they appear. (The definition of corporate image used by this author is given in Chapter 2 p. 18 ante.)

Other terms, such as corporate culture, corporate personality and marketing image will also be defined in the context in which they appear.

▶ *Aims of corporate image*

What *Olins* names *'the fundamental idea'* behind corporate image is that:

*"...in everything a company does, everything it owns, everything it produces, the company should project a clear idea of what it is and what its aims are..."*

*Olins (1984) p. 32*

The rationale for this is that the desired personality and quality of the whole organisation and its parts, in being provided with a visual consistency to its internal and external audiences, assists both the marketing objectives and organisational strategy. Brian Boylan, the group managing director of the Wolff Olins company, reaffirms this suggestion:

*"...Put very simply, corporate identity is about the relationship between an organisation's central idea - the essence of what it is and what is unique*

*to it - and how that is projected and communicated internally and externally...."* *Boylan(1989) p. 17*

There are a number of important issues raised by these views. Company mission statements, directors' visions, strategy documents, corporate plans and objectives, internal and external marketing are all management and employees terms and processes which contribute towards corporate success. Little appears new in the principle idea that is being espoused by this designer view. What does require further examination and analysis are the specific views of designers on how corporate identity can change perception and the importance of internal as well as external audiences.

*e) Perception and its relevance to corporate image.*

The inference from the design perspective (and made explicit by Olins as previously stated), is that corporate identity and image has the ability to alter an individual's and a group's perception. Perception in this context means knowledge of, or beliefs about the organisation in all its facets, and the means by which an individual acquires this knowledge.

Perception has however, an idiosyncratic quality; the impressions individuals form, the inferences individuals draw about characteristics, qualities and experiences differ, perhaps to a marked degree. A variety of factors, including the individual's motivational state, context and experience all operate to shape the individual's perceptual world.

There is much psychological evidence of how individuals may differ in their perceptions, for

example, individuals may differ in the extent to which they concentrate upon visual cues as opposed to knowledge; attitudes as opposed to abilities; and emotions as opposed to thoughts as well as in their choice between the specific dimensions within these major classes. What is significant for this research, and for all organisational image analysis, is neatly encapsulated by *Dornbusch et al (1965)*. They confirmed that if an individual does not comment about a specific feature of another individual or organisation, again, for example, '*good image*' or '*poor image*', this does not necessarily mean that the individual has no views on the individual or organisation's image, but rather that the dimension of image is not important or salient to them. (The link to this current work being that attempts at a quantitative analysis of police corporate image would not appear to be valid).

It seems likely that the categories which are salient to the individual are those with functional significance, *Tajfel (1969)*. In other words, the salient categories are those which are most of use to the individual in organising his or her world. Hence, to a designer, the physical properties of people and organisations may become the most salient dimension in their experience of them. The company director on the other hand may '*see*' people or organisations in terms of how reliable and hardworking they are or appear to be. This may go some way to explain the dominance or importance which the design perspective gives to visual cues in organisations. It is also in their vested commercial interest if they are also working in the design consultancy field.

One of the key characteristics of the perceptual process is that of inference. Individuals base their impressions of others, and their ideas of what others are feeling, on data, and they go beyond this data to formulate their impressions and beliefs. The process of inferring from

data is not random. It may be regarded as resting on prior beliefs or rules about the characteristics of others. Inference may be regarded as another dimension along which individuals differ. Two individuals may arrive at the same impression of an organisation, but base it on entirely different data, or on entirely different premises (beliefs). Alternatively, they may attend to the same data, but arrive at entirely different conclusions if their premises are different.

*Barich & Kotler (1991)* emphasise the nature and importance of image analysis to correct false impressions or images of organisations:

*"...We use the term 'image' to represent the sum of beliefs, attitudes and impressions that a person or group has of an object. The impressions may be true or false, real or imagined.....a perceived weakness may not be real. In that case, the company needs to direct communications to correct this misconception...."*

*p. 102*

Individual differences then, concerning the characteristics, qualities and knowledge of organisations are based on prior beliefs, sometimes quite erroneous, about how these features are expressed and associated with one another. Also, the context in which the judgement is carried out appears to have a powerful effect on the judgement made. Most of the evidence that context affects perception comes from psychological studies of the perception of form, colour and other physical dimensions, for example, *Mintz (1956)*. The effect that the author's previous research experience in psychology has had on the perception and interpretation of the data contained in this thesis, as well as the value of a psychology

background, is outlined in a reflexive account of the research process, (Chapter Eleven).

▶ *The relevance of internal and external audiences*

*"....Different audiences will form a view of an organisation based on the totality of the impressions that the company makes on them. Where these impressions are contradictory - where impressions made in one place are different from those made somewhere else - the overall impression will be negative, or at any rate confusing...."*

*Olins (1984) p. 72*

Apart from the external audiences or publics that many business and marketing writers have previously identified, Olins places great emphasis on the need to communicate with '*internal and quasi - internal*' audiences such as staff at all levels, trades unions, shareholders, directors, pensioners and families of employees:

*"....outward consistency will only be achieved, and for that matter is only appropriate, if it is the manifestation of an inward consistency - an inward consistency of purpose within the organisation - which if it is widely understood internally becomes manifest externally...."*

*Olins (1984) p. 45*

This can be described as an extension of the view that employee communications, mission statements, performance indicators, objectives and overall philosophy of organisations should not be conceived and remain embedded in top management - it must reach



everybody. This, again, is not new, it has been recognised for many decades - communication is basic to organisation - it links organisation members. It mediates the inputs to the organisation and the outputs from the organisation to the environment, *Guethow (1985)*. In effect it is '*the very essence*' of organisations, *Katz and Khan (1966)*. Corporate internal marketing, where internal customer needs and values are matched with the internal products and services created in order to fulfil the mission of the organisation and the vision of the people in it, *Thompson (1990)*, also espouses the ideals of communication.

Indeed, as long ago as 1938 *Barnard* suggested:

*"....In the exhaustive theory of organisation, communication would occupy a central place, because the structure, extensiveness, and scope of organisations are almost entirely determined by communication techniques...."*

*p. 148*

Internal communication is a substantive issue in a variety of widely disparate disciplines - each adopting its own specific focus - and developing its own terminology and technology. It appears that the designers corporate image perspective has created yet another language and set of terms for this issue.

As mentioned previously corporate image is closely linked with the marketing discipline and marketing academics have also recently focused on the targeting of internal audiences to assist or '*enable*' organisational effectiveness. For example, *Thompson (1990)* states that:

*"....corporate internal marketing creates an inspiring climate in which, by developing a framework of targeted communication aimed at everyone in the organisation, motivation and morale thrive. Corporate internal marketing ensures that both the internal people relationships and the business resources are working in harmony to achieve the organisation's strategic and tactical goals...."*

*p. xii*

*Piercy (1991)* terms the same process as '*strategic internal marketing*' which has a similar goal of:

*"....developing a marketing programme aimed at the internal market place in the company that parallels and matches the marketing competitors...."*

*p. 367*

These above aims and goals are identical to the aims of corporate image from a design perspective.

To summarise the review of the aims of corporate image from a design perspective; it has been examined in terms of the elements of perceptions, impressions and inferences and in terms of internal communication. Work on how impressions are formed of organisations, contributes some insights into the designer's view of corporate image. At first individuals may have to make do with simple data such as a visual identity to form an impression of an organisation but experience of, or contact with, the organisation leads to images of a more complex nature.

Certainly the design perspective sees visual images as forming part of the data on which individuals judge organisations but further assert that the identity must remain consistent to the values of the organisation or it may be seen as superficial and dismissed from value judgements. The assertion is that this consistency will be achieved by improved by internal communication. This cannot be viewed as a new or unique concept - but perhaps is a convenient way to describe a process which has obvious benefits to any organisation.

▶ ***Rationale for the introduction of a corporate image programme***

From the design perspective the rationale behind the introduction of a corporate image programme is to assist the organisation with its image when it:

***"....gets out of phase with reality..... at a time of merger, diversification, reorganisation or other profound structural and management changes...."*** ***Olins (1984) p. 22***

This view is supported by ***Barich and Kotler (1991)*** who state:

***"....Right or wrong, images guide and shape behaviour. Companies need to identify their image strengths and weakness' and take action to improve their images...."*** ***p. 94***

They, however, introduce a whole new concept of '*marketing image*' and describe a system

of image management for organisations: designing a study, collecting data, analysing image problems, modifying the image and tracking responses to the image. They argue that only a systematic approach will yield useful and accurate information that an organisation can translate into action:

*"...They (companies) must design their offers and their images to be competitively attractive. The target customers carry images in their heads about each suppliers' product, quality, service quality, prices and so on. The images are not always accurate, but nevertheless they influence supplier selection...."*

*Barich and Kotler (1991) p. 106*

While Barich and Kotler claim a marketing image is distinct from a corporate image - because it is the way people view the quality of the company's overall marketing offer and marketing mix rather than the whole company - the distinction is illusory. Different image factors certainly affect the corporate image of the company, and a model of the components of corporate image was given in the previous chapter, (Chapter Two p. 20 ante), but the 'marketing image' is only that - an image factor.

In reviewing the rationale behind corporate image it is obvious that the claims are that it can be used as a vehicle for corporate strategy. Similar justifiable claims can be made for example, for marketing strategy - of which corporate image could be a part. Nevertheless, the corporate image programme has been developed to describe and analyse certain communication processes in organisations and it is the model of research/audit advocated by the corporate image specialists will now be examined.

▶ *Introduction and implementation of a corporate image programme*

The methods of introducing and implementing corporate image programmes follow standard organisational research, including some marketing models. There is an investigation to elicit information, then a development of a design brief and idea, and finally formulation of a programme and a launch. Dependant from which perspective the corporate image specialist works, the investigation or research may be a simple visual audit of the organisation or a more in depth qualitative research into the organisation's culture. *Olins' (1984)* view is that more often than not the designer will:

*"....Take account of the company's position in the market place, its structure, its product range, its branding policies, its morale, its geographical and functional organisation...."* *p. 23*

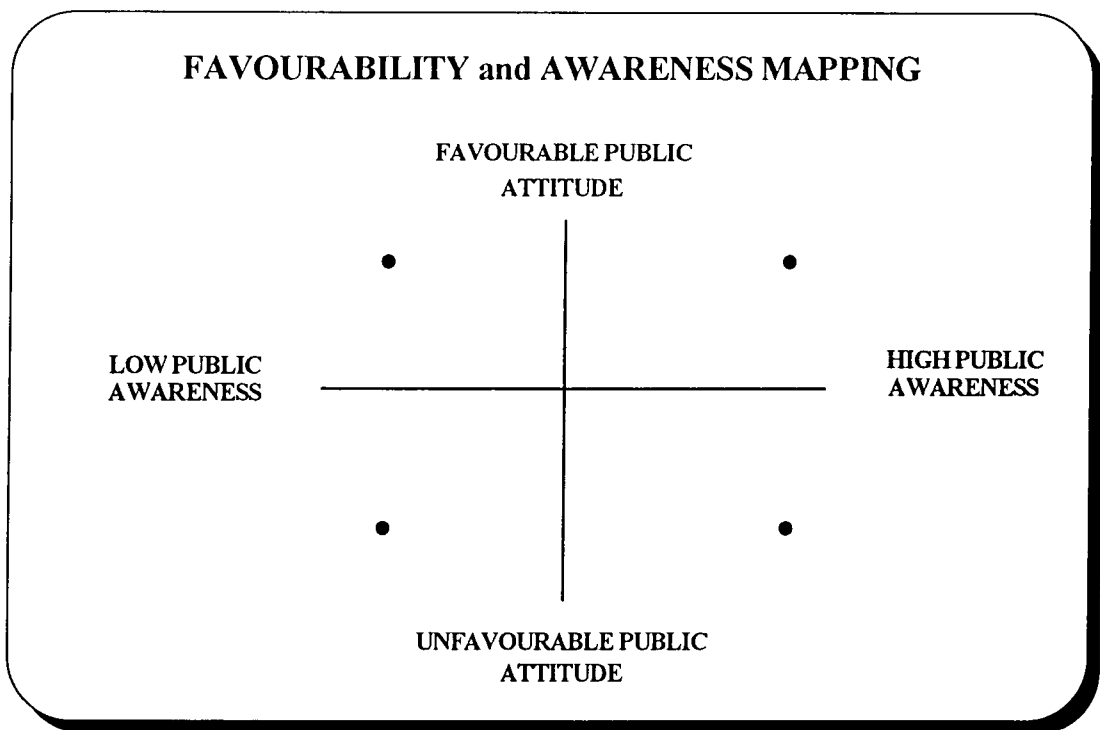
As such this does correlate with marketing research as defined by the *American Marketing Association (1987)* where:

*"....Marketing research specifies the information required to address these issues; designs the methods for collecting the information; manage and implements the data collection process; analyses the results; and communicates the findings and their implications...."*

*Marketing News (1987)*

Acknowledging the similarity, there are also differences. In order to evaluate an

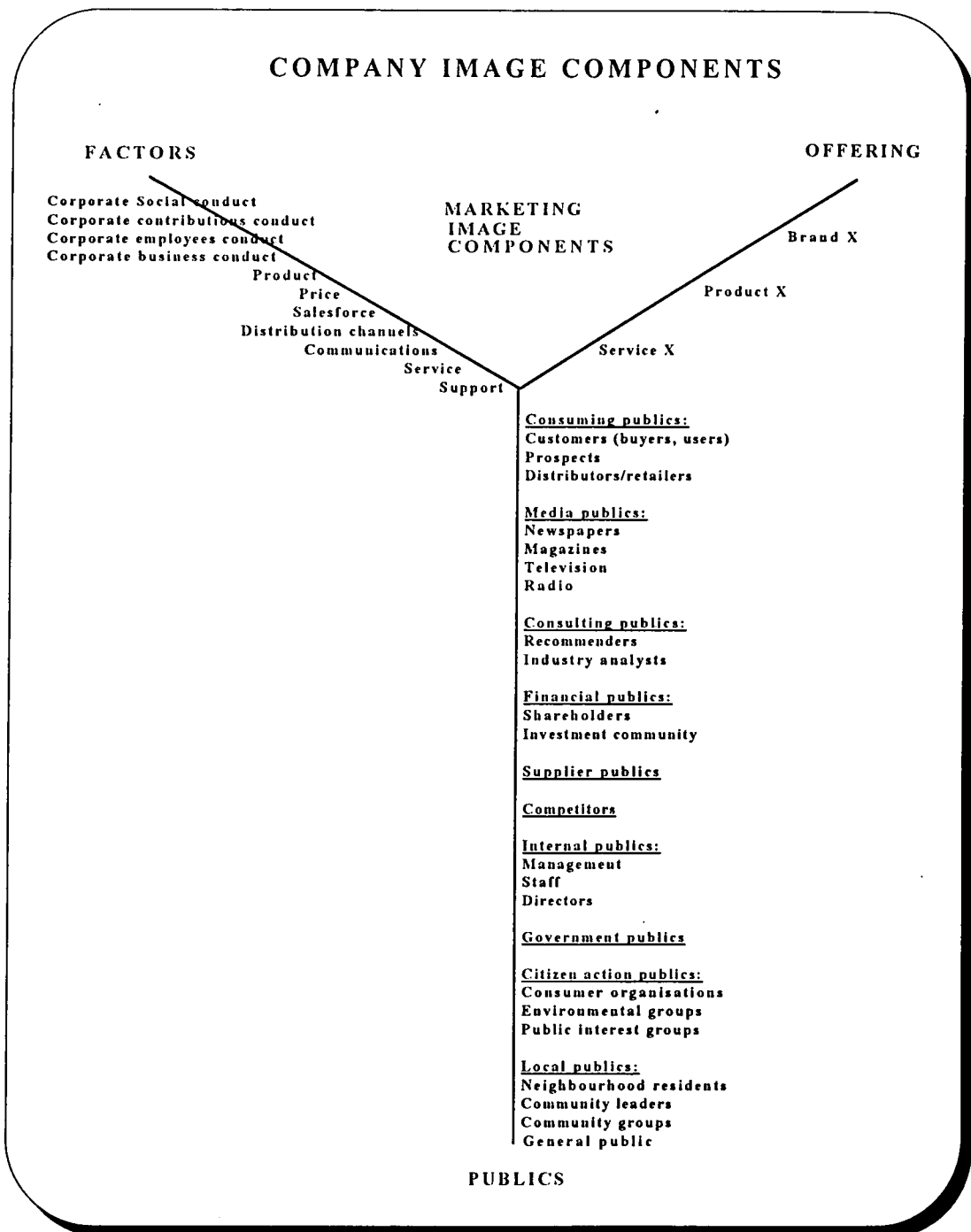
organisation's corporate image or measure its comparable image with other competing organisations, research is advocated by designers. Corporate image research is not confined to the marketing sphere; the suggestion is that it is much more all embracing. *Barich and Kotler (1991)* link the two types of research - they suggest a starting point for image analysis is to discover the relationship between a company's reputation and level of public awareness, (see *Figure 3*), below:



*Figure 3 A framework for marketing image, Barich and Kotler p. 104*

The suggestion here is that the company or organisation should be aspiring to high public awareness coupled with a favourable public attitude.

As they see corporate image and marketing image performing different roles, this is an understandable distinction, but they then go on to describe the analysis which must be made of the company's marketing image and highlight exactly the same components that the corporate image process advocates, (see *Figure 4*), below:



*Figure 4 Marketing image - components, Barich and Kotler p. 105*

In summary, the corporate image research appears an extension of the well established SWOT principle which is used in many planning and audit roles involving organisations - including marketing analysis. The role of marketing analysis has traditionally been the bedrock on which marketing policy is built. Similarly image research is the foundation of a corporate image programme. It is not, however, constrained by only looking at the marketing of the organisation. The broader remit means that marketing is part of the research but not the only research.

▶ *Intended benefits of a corporate image programme*

Like the subject of corporate image itself, the stated intended benefits of a successful company corporate image programme are very broad indeed. For example, improving morale and motivation to establishing effective new markets are some of the benefits listed by Olins. Perhaps here also there is a link to marketing in general and internal marketing in particular:

*"....So does it (corporate image programme) work? It is impossible to say conclusively. The case evidence suggests that it helps. The survey evidence suggests that so few people do it, it is difficult to generalise. But where they do, it seems to have a good effect...."*

*Piercy (1991) p. 367*

It previously suggested in this chapter, (p. 41 ante), that the design perspective of corporate image often embeds its concepts and principles in descriptions of particularly successful corporate image programmes/campaigns which they then describe as case studies. Two of



these such programmes illustrate the design perspective and are pertinent to the current research - I.C.I. and the Metropolitan Police. Both follow the framework for marketing image management suggested by Barich and Kotler, (although Barich and Kotler's work appeared some years after the corporate image programmes were instituted at the two organisations concerned). The two programmes will now be examined. The I.C.I. study will illustrate how the design perspective can identify the image of an organisation and then, through developing a cultural strategy to the programme based upon knowledge of the corporate image, have an impact on organisational effectiveness. The Metropolitan Police study will illustrate how the police image was identified for that force but that it remains unclear whether the corporate image programme has developed to address cultural issues prevalent in the police service.

*f) I.C.I. corporate image programme*

In 1964, Imperial Chemical Industries (I.C.I.), was the largest wholly owned British manufacturing group. Through diversification and acquisitions, the company expanded into an international conglomerate and for many years enjoyed growth and financial success. However, the early 1980's saw the company making its first losses ever and management embarked upon a programme of change. The following information regarding I.C.I.'s corporate image programme was gathered from two Corporate Marketing Managers, David Senior and Anne Ferguson, tasked to '*mastermind a global corporate image campaign*', as well as relevant company literature.

One of the prime concerns of I.C.I.'s management was its image and its

familiarity/favourability with key target publics. The questions asked by management were as follows:

- ▶ what image did I.C.I. want?
- ▶ what image did it have anyway?
- ▶ what groups of people did I.C.I. want to reach?
- ▶ what did they like and dislike about I.C.I.?

and probably most crucial - could I.C.I. do anything itself to change its behaviour and shape to match the image that it wanted its target audiences to have?

*Ferguson (1989)* described it as '*a very straightforward process*'. First the research was carried out - what were the target groups for the campaign and what level of awareness existed; then come up with a strategy to increase awareness within those groups to the level desired by the company.

It can be seen that this methodology follows very closely the investigative/design brief stage of the corporate image model suggested by Olins and also closely mirrors the image analysis stage postulated by Barich and Kotler. Indeed the analysis of the initial I.C.I. research findings carried out by M.O.R.I. were even illustrated in a similar way. (See overleaf and for comparison Figure 3, p. 55 ante)

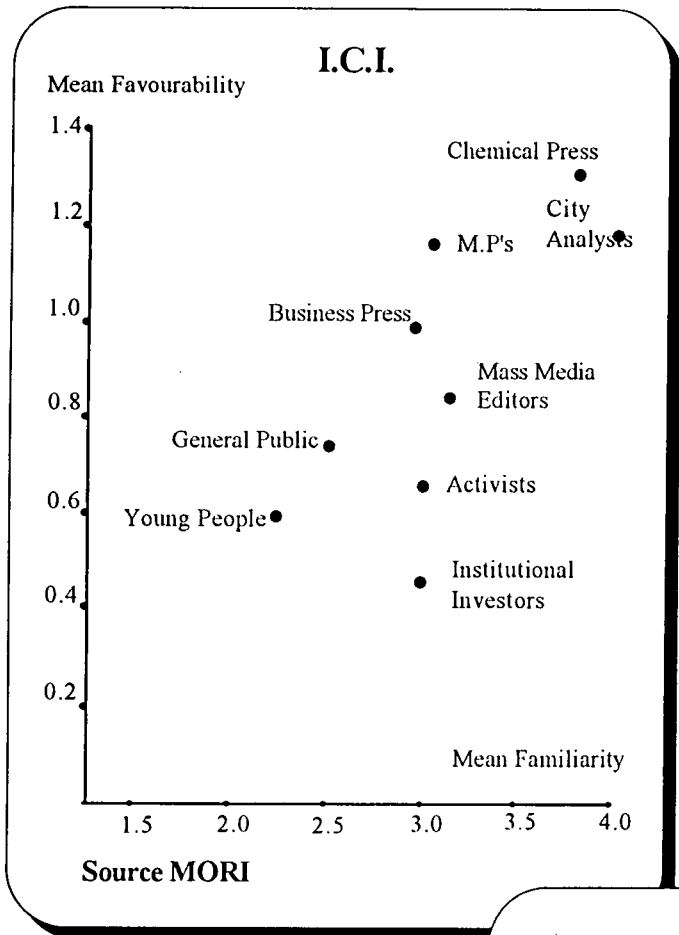
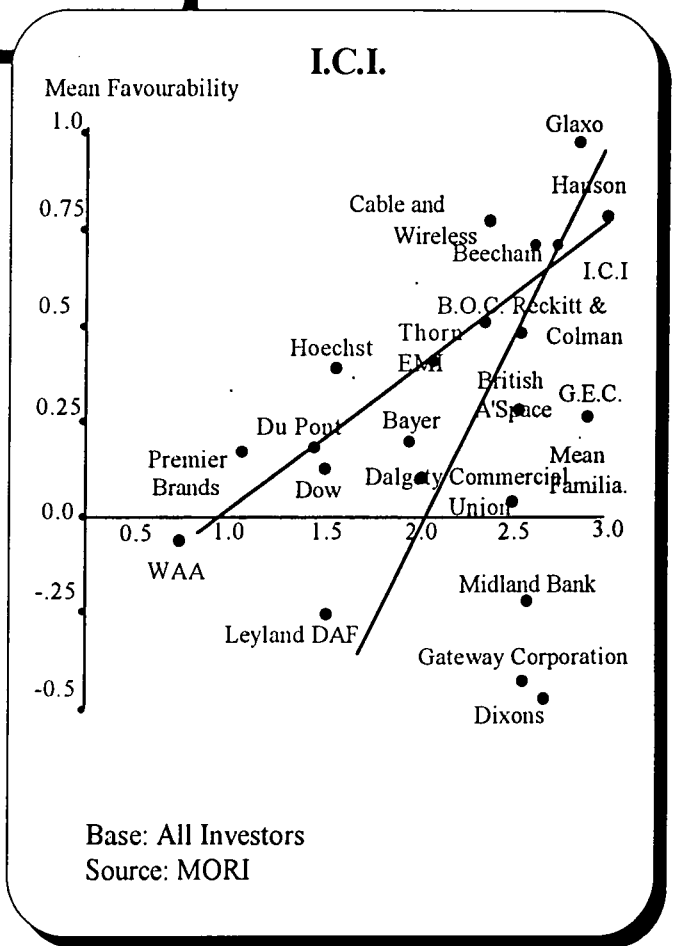


Figure 5 I.C.I. 'Publics' p. 10

Figure 6 I.C.I. 'Investors' p. 11



*Senior (1989)*, who was in charge of the research, said that it showed that people respected I.C.I. but didn't think it enhanced their everyday lives. It was also revealed that:

*"....our image among the young was weak, and everywhere environmental pressure was increasing. We had to find a simple, powerful way of showing that I.C.I. is working to improve the quality of life worldwide...."*

The corporate image programme objectives in I.C.I.'s case were three pronged: they involved strengthening the visual impact of the I.C.I. brand mark and making its use consistent around the world; undertaking an employee communications programme; and finding an advertising proposition for I.C.I. that would work across the globe.

I.C.I. pioneered the concept of corporate image advertising in the 1960's with its Pathfinder and Ideas in Action campaigns. These were limited to the U.K., however, and 20 years on, changed business conditions meant that it was crucial I.C.I.'s global presence was recognised. As *Ferguson (1989)* states:

*"....The U.K. view was outdated - I.C.I. as a British institution was looked upon with fondness and an enormous amount of respect. But people thought of I.C.I. as a heavy chemicals, paint and pharmaceutical company with very little understanding of its breadth and export record. Customers knew about the products they bought but again, were not aware of the range we could offer...."*

*p. 14*

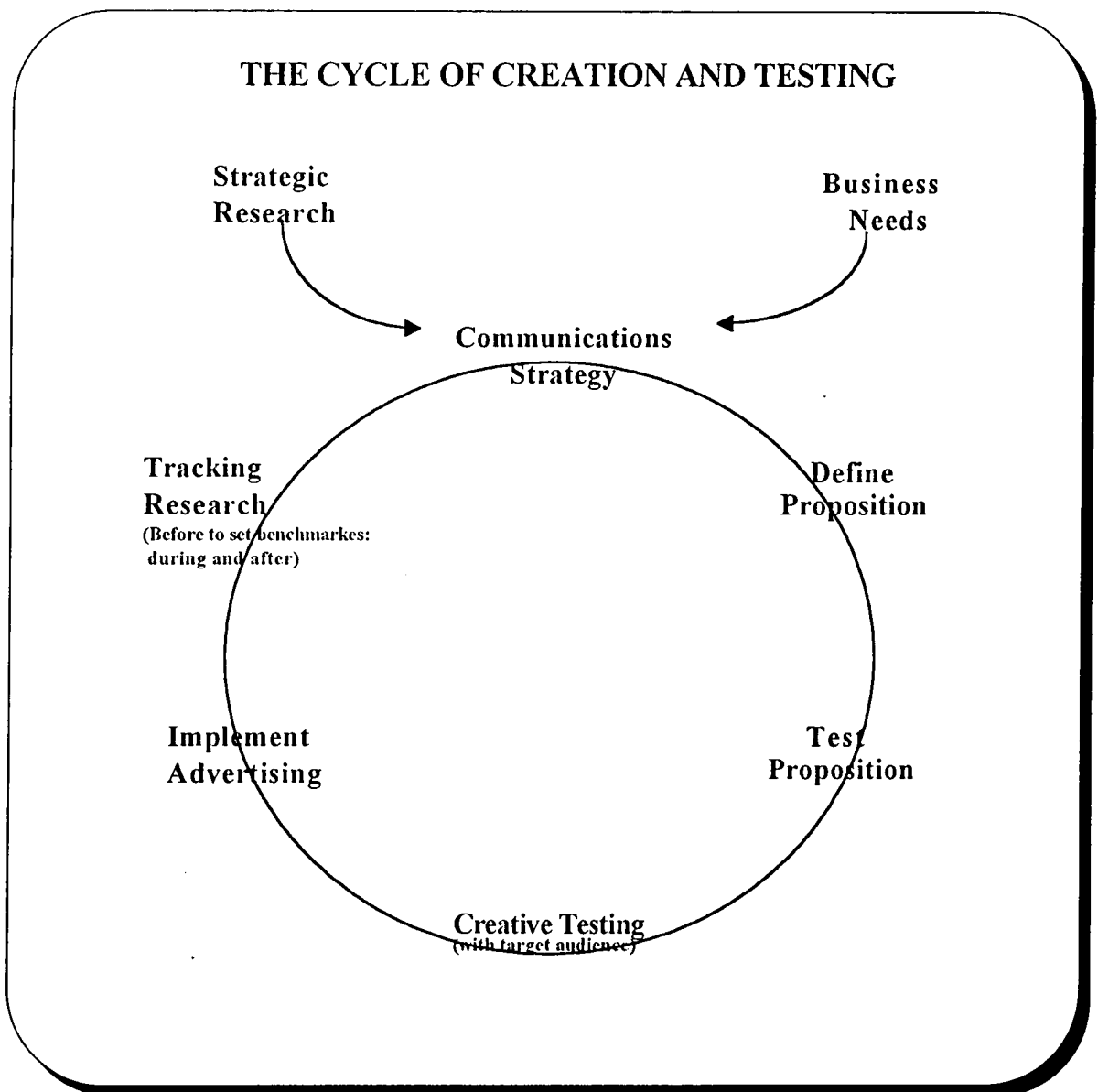
In what was described as the '*bedrock of company image formation*', market research was painstaking and thorough. One of the things that market research established early on was that I.C.I.'s image had slipped. It was seen by key audiences as being grey, cumbersome and bureaucratic. In other words, I.C.I. was not playing to its strengths, some of them long established, some newly acquired.

In the U.S.A. awareness was low and finally, internally the question of image had to be tackled as well. This followed an old adage that employees are excellent ambassadors for their company when harnessed to the cause. The trouble was, I.C.I. had changed so much in previous few years, the research carried out by the company showed that employees themselves were confused about the nature of its business and were not as effective representatives as they could, or should have been.

Again the approach involved here illustrates the internal marketing principles previously discussed in the corporate image model (Figure 1 p. 20 ante), and that discussed by *Piercy and Thompson (1990) pp. 80 - 81*. It is not necessarily unique to corporate image but the linkage provided by the corporate image - that between strengthening the visual impact of the brand mark, consistency, internal marketing and external advertising - is valuable as a concept.

Research in fact drove the I.C.I. corporate image programme. *Senior (1989)* saw the process as an ever revolving cycle where the communications strategy continually responds to the needs of businesses and is tested through market research. And all the time, the cycle of creative development is being constantly tested and fine tuned.

The cycle is graphically illustrated in *Figure 7*, below:



*Figure 7 The I.C.I. cycle of creation and testing, p. 16*

The visible manifestation of the corporate image programme was a redesign of the famous I.C.I. roundel by the Wolff Olins company. The roundel had previously been used in a

fragmented way, by different parts of the company for different purposes and often in different colours. Some subsidiaries did not use it at all. Not only was the look of the roundel sharpened up, a system for using it worldwide in a consistent fashion was created by Wolff Olins. I.C.I. embarked on a campaign to ensure each part of its business put it on letterheads, flags, lorries and signs around the world. The identity is now the same whether the I.C.I. plant is in India, Germany or the United States of America.

There is little doubt that I.C.I. was Britain's largest manufacturer and that the group dominated the markets of the old empire. It then, with the catalyst of a downturn in profits in the 1980's, perceived that it had an identity problem. With a corporate image programme the company has developed and is now an international competitor. The question remains; how much of this success can be attributed to corporate image?

In reviewing this corporate image programme it is obvious that the programme has involved much more than a simple visual treatment. Continuous research identified the relative position of I.C.I. in the market place, the image it portrayed to key audiences - including employees, and an overall communication problem.

In the corporate image programme the importance of the visual style and consistency has been underlined and the identity change of the roundel logo has proved an integral part of the overall programme. The value appears to have been that the visual changes have provided a focus for improved internal and external communication which in turn has clarified company philosophy and strategy to all audiences. This may be the role for a corporate image programme within Durham Constabulary and the police service. The

corporate image programme within I.C.I. has made a contribution to the improved organisational performance of the organisation but it cannot be proved to be *the* causal factor of the success.

Other corporate image programmes cited by designers e.g. Prudential, Midland Bank, British Airways, B.O.C. and others (Design Conference 1989) also emphasise this value of corporate image - the fact that it can be a catalyst and focus for change - the strength appearing to emanate from the fact that it is a physical manifestation through identity of whatever the organisation is trying to achieve. A further corporate image programme which both illustrates this point and is particularly pertinent to this thesis is the Metropolitan Police.

***g) Metropolitan Police: corporate image programme***

The following information on the programme was obtained from interviews within the Wolff Olins company, officers involved in the programme, serving operational officers and relevant literature produced by the programme.

The remit for the Police corporate image programme was to:

*"....embark on a process of change aimed at improving the quality of service, primarily to the public, but also within the organisation to the internal customer...."*

*Collins (1991) p. 317*



The rationale for the work was a response to concern from many quarters about confidence in the police and the fact that a 'service' orientation apparently was not a primary facet of the organisation, for example, *Brogden (1982); Fielding (1988); Uglow (1988); McConville and Shepherd (1992)*.

The Wolff Olins company carried out qualitative research in a study:

*"...concerned with identity, with what the organisation stands for, how it does things and how it is perceived..."* *Olins (1988) p. 3*

(Again of course the questions regarding perceptions and inferences are equally applicable.)

The research over six months involved over 250 formal interviews plus an 'audit' of all physical literature, signs and symbols of the Metropolitan Police organisation.

Following analysis of the research the Olins company identified a series of issues for the Metropolitan Police published in a report entitled '*A Force for Change*' and summarised under the headings listed below:

- ▶ *Purpose*
- ▶ *Organisation*
- ▶ *Management*
- ▶ *Attitudes*
- ▶ *Communication*
- ▶ *Presentation*

All of the above issues illustrate the link between the design and cultural perspectives of image which are now briefly described.

▶ *Purpose*

*"...The employees of the Metropolitan Police do not share a common sense of purpose. There is no consistency of views on the overall mission of the Met., nor how each individual contributes to the whole..."*

*Olins (1988) p. 8*

This accords with various studies of the Police both past and recent, for example, *Bittner (1967, 1970); Manning (1977, 1979); Holdaway (1983); Fielding (1988); Uglow (1988); Graef (1989); McConville and Shepherd (1992)*. Olins describes the role of the Metropolitan Police as uncertain with divergence of views on what is 'proper' police work either a crime or service orientation. *McConville and Shepherd (1992)* refer to police culture as:

*"...antipathetic towards the service model of policing..."* *p. 199*

and further reference to this work will be made in Chapter Four on the cultural perspective of corporate image of the police.

▶ *Organisation*

The Olins report describes the Metropolitan organisation divided through internal division:

*"...There is of course inter-divisional rivalry in most big organisations but we think it is especially prevalent in the Met..."*      *Olins (1988) p. 8*

Again these findings are replicated by later studies both internal and external and in particular it is emphasised by *Fielding (1988)* that divisions between specialist departments, between uniform and C.I.D. officers and between police and civil staff are part of the learned culture of recruits.

▶ *Management*

The Olins report addresses the broad issues of management in the Metropolitan Police by stating they are 'struggling to manage' and summarise the findings as:

- Improved training required;
- Management needs to meet subordinates expectations;
- Promotion, rewards and retribution must reflect stated management values and objectives.

The linkages to corporate image are unclear but there are certainly cultural issues such as systems, standards, quality control and lines of communication and responsibility.

▶ *Attitudes*

As has been previously reported, the service ethos of the police organisation appears to be undervalued by the culture of the workforce. The research of the Olins company revealed:

*"....The attitude of the Met. towards the world in which it works can best be described as wary. Many policemen and women feel beleaguered and misunderstood...."*

*Olins (1988) p. 11*

While emphasising that the 'key to any service activity is attitude', the findings also showed that:

*"....The attitudes of some police officers toward the public are insensitive and thoughtless...."*

*Olins (1988) p. 12*

As has been noted, *Deal and Kennedy (1982); Schein (1985); Morgan (1986); Ouchi (1980)*, though culture is unconscious and invisible it is a determinant of behaviour and is therefore of practical relevance. Apart from raising questions of strategy the questions of attitude lie squarely in the area of culture as well as image.

▶ *Communication*

Unsurprisingly, (however Olins accepts '*traditionally organisations' communications do not work well*'), both internal and external communication in the Metropolitan Police was found

to be inadequate, inconsistent and of *'patchy quality'*. It has also been previously acknowledged that one of the strengths of corporate image is to provide a physical focus through communication. The Olins report further indicates the relationship between corporate image and culture in this section on communication. It summarises that their findings on communication are:

*"....Symptoms of an organisation with an unclear attitude to service and to its public role...."* *Olins (1988) p. 14*

▶ *Presentation*

The final section of the report covers the research into the physical identity of the Metropolitan Police. And again the relationship between image and culture is implicit in the conclusions:

*"....Nothing can change perceptions so quickly and dramatically as improving the way the Met. looks. This will have an effect on the way people in the Met. behave - and how the public behave to the Met...."*

*Olins (1988) p. 15*

What remains unclear is how improving the physical *'looks'* of the organisation is going to impact upon the behaviour of both internal and external publics.

From this initial report by Olins, the Metropolitan Police have embarked upon a programme

of cultural change named the 'PLUS' programme. In the words of the Commissioner of the Police for the Metropolis this programme:

*"...Takes us forward from 'A Force For Change' (the title of the report by Olins) and is about action not words...."* *Imbert (1989) p. 2*

This PLUS programme, because of its link to the corporate image research and culture of the police, will be reviewed in the next chapter. The contribution of the work of the Olins is an acknowledgement of the relationship and linkage between corporate culture and corporate image in the police service. What has yet to be discovered and analysed is the nature of the linkage between the two concepts and what the effect of corporate culture has on corporate image projected.

#### ***h) Summary of chapter***

Corporate image can be seen as a set of cause and effect relationships. Two distinct perspectives of corporate image, the design and cultural perspectives, suggest a strong link between corporate image and corporate culture. The cause and effect of design influences on corporate image have been examined in this chapter.

Designers pioneered the concept of corporate image. This perspective emphasises the importance of visual style and consistency as an integral part of an overall organisational programme of change. In stressing the importance of tangible signs of change to an organisation's image, for example by changing company names or logos, the designer's view

is that their perspective can offer a focus for change or be a catalyst for change. Some illustrations of such views have been given.

What is apparent is that, to use a further psychological term, designers use 'argots' - arguably special language or anti-language. Their use of alternative word and expressions, either new terms, jargon terms, or old terms in a new context, has led to considerable confusion about the nature of the concepts of corporate identity and corporate image. The intended benefits of a corporate image from this design perspective offer another layer of organisational jargon for good management practice.

There is, however, a consistency of view from the design perspective that some form of 'image analysis' must take place prior to an organisation embarking upon a corporate image programme. Image 'management' is then viewed as an external marketing function, although this does include certain internal communication strategies.

The design perspective highlights that corporate image is used by internal and external audiences as a basis for inference and belief about products, services or organisations.

What has not been firmly established is the effect of corporate culture on corporate image - or indeed what the nature of the linkage between the two concepts actually is.

This research and thesis will give detailed consideration to the relationship between corporate image and corporate culture and the next chapter specifically explores the cultural perspective of corporate image.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## *Image myopia: another role for culture ?*

### *a) Introduction*

The previous chapter covered the components of corporate image which were described as a 'design perspective' of the subject. This chapter continues by examining the three components of corporate image which cover a 'cultural perspective'. These elements, or components, of influence were outlined in the model given in Chapter Two, (p. 20 ante), as:

- ▶ *the service provided by the organisation,*
- ▶ *the employees' own image of the organisation, and*
- ▶ *organisational culture.*

The analysis of the cultural perspective begins with a description of culture in the work environment and its possible effects on the corporate image of the organisation. The specific relevance of this to Durham Constabulary and in the police context is then reviewed. A summary provides an interpretation of the possible importance of the cultural perspective to the body of the thesis.



b) *Culture in the work environment*

*"....Work may be a mere source of livelihood, or the most significant part of one's inner life; it may be experienced as expiation, or as an exuberant expression of self; as a bounden duty, or as a development of man's universal nature. Neither love nor hatred of work is inherent in man, or inherent in any given line of work...."*

*Mills C.W. (1956) p. 210*

Any examination of the meaning of culture in the work environment can be subject to vastly different interpretations from different theoretical standpoints or perspectives. A large number of studies have revealed that employees of any organisation hold complex, variable, contradictory and ambiguous attitudes towards various aspects of work. Attitudes of individuals to their work do not, however, develop in isolation. They are powerfully affected by the individual's social environment including the attitudes of other members of their work group. In day-to-day work situations group attitudes and beliefs are often overlooked in research. As *Argyle (1989)* notes:

*"....Classical management theory did not mention working groups, but research has shown that the composition and inner dynamics of groups can have a marked effect on productivity and satisfaction...."* p. 193

Elsewhere, Argyle emphasises the importance of two aspects of any organisational work groups; their size and their cohesiveness. If the group members are attracted towards the

group and are prepared to co-operate with one another they are more likely to be more effective in attaining the goals of the group (which may, of course, not be the same as the goals of the organisation within which the group operates). Not only are the attitudes of group members *towards* the group important, but in turn many of the attitudes and beliefs of group members will be strongly influenced *by* the group.

Recognising that work is a group activity where behaviour is influenced by the work environment and the people within it, has been identified for many decades:

*"...Man's desire to be continuously associated in work with his fellows is a strong, if not the strongest human characteristic...."*

*Mayo (1945) p. 32*

It is not, however, until relatively recently that the term culture has been used to describe the many factors in the work environment. Moreover, as with corporate image from a design perspective, are the claims for the effects of culture on organisations justifiable; and what effect, if any, does culture have on corporate image?

Culture, like corporate image, can be described as a metaphor, a particular perspective for analysing organisations. It is no more 'right' as a viewpoint than other metaphors, but it does illuminate certain aspects of organisational functioning which are increasingly being recognised as significant and related to effectiveness, and which exponents believe reveals more about organisations than the use of other metaphors.

In one of the classic texts on this perspective, *Morgan (1986)*, builds on the basic premise that theories and explanations of organisational life are based on metaphors:

*"...Many of our conventional ideas about organisation build on a small number of taken - for - granted images.....By using different metaphors to understand the complex and paradoxical character of organisational life, we are able to manage and design organisations in ways that we may not have thought possible before ...."* *p. 87*

As has been previously stated in Chapter Two, (pp. 25-26 ante), it is not easy to define culture. Like the phenomenon itself, individuals are familiar with it, know of its existence, recognise aspects when they are pointed out and yet find it difficult to say what it really is. And again, like the design perspective, the theory of culture is descriptive rather than explanatory.

Each of the many different definitions of culture hints at a different facet of culture as a phenomenon. Taken separately they are only partially satisfactory. From Morgan's perspective the power of the concept of culture comes from the ability to reflect the multiple layers of organisational life and particularly to go below the surface, to illuminate factors which underpin and shape everyday behaviour. In this sense the claim is that more can become known about the deep structure of the organisation to balance understanding of superficial patterns and expressions.

In order to find a clearer explanation of the term culture, it is necessary to look beyond the literature of management - to the discipline whose concern is the study of cultures, namely anthropology.

The anthropologist and classic theorist Clifford *Geertz (1973)*, describes culture in the following way:

*"...Culture denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life..."* p. 47

Taking each of the elements of this definition individually, a more dynamic understanding of both culture and corporate image, and the links between the two, can be drawn.

An explanation of the first element regarding 'an historically transmitted pattern', is that cultures form, develop and evolve over time. In this sense, a culture represents a living record of an organisation's past. (The full impact of how this has influenced the police service is given in Chapter 9 post.) The way in which things are done now, the conventions, the rituals and practices, reflect an organisation's learning and acquired wisdom. Over time some norms and values may shift or change, but in the main they are usually very resilient and robust. They are passed on to each new generation of people who join, perpetuating the organisation's distinctive character.

Advertisers and public relations communicators often make use of an organisation's reputation that is built up over time to reinforce the corporate image of the organisation.

This is based on the premise that:

*"....An organisation's history substantiates the reputation that substantiates the image...."*

*Weindrvch (1993) p. 19*

The replication of police culture and its effects on new recruits has been investigated by *Fielding (1988)*, and this will be referred to later in the chapter.

Geertz's notion of 'patterned meaning', is one of the ideas at the heart of the concept of corporate culture. For example, the same word has a different meaning depending on the culture in which it is set. In a similar way, a closed office door means something different in a department which has an 'open-door' management policy, than in a department where the doors are generally shut.

Understanding a culture requires finding out what meanings people attach to objects and events and looking to discover the ways in which these meanings form patterns. These may well differ between sub - groups within one organisation. The term 'community development' might hold a different meaning for a group of youth workers than it would, say, for a group of architects or indeed for a group of police officers.

The next part of Geertz's definition, 'patterns of meanings embodied in symbols', identifies with the designers' perspective of corporate image but develops it a little

further. Symbols can be thought of as vehicles that carry meaning in much the same way that *Olins (op cit)* described them as conveying the essence of the organisation. According to the cultural perspective as the symbols carry meaning they are therefore the main access to understanding culture. Where the perspective differs from the one of the designer is that there are two types of symbol distinguished: high and low profile.

A visitor or newcomer to most organisations will quickly learn about the organisation's high profile symbols. These are the public faces of the organisation and are to be found, among other places, in publicity material, formal statements of mission, company newspapers, logos, slogans, catch-phrases, environments such as buildings and office layouts, speeches and ceremonies. Sometimes they are formalised in charters, codes of practice or, in the case of the police, also in an overall instruction manual entitled 'Standing Orders'.

In some organisations, elaborate conferences or presentations are staged in order to impart a particular set of messages. Induction procedures for new employees are in themselves symbols, educating individuals in the values and practices, teaching them 'how we do things round here'. This is particularly so in most Japanese companies who issue personal handbooks to each new employee detailing company history and philosophy.

In their various ways, each of these activities will contain statements about what the organisation stands for, what it believes in, how it operates and what it is striving towards. They will be in the statements about the image, identity and characteristic

values and practices of an organisation. In the case of the police this is known as 'The Statement of Common Purpose and Values' (1990). These types of statements are what is meant by high profile symbols - they are designed to be conspicuous, are normally carefully rehearsed and may even be stage-managed. Much thought and energy is likely to have been invested in them in order to 'give the right impression'.

As was stated in the designers' perspective, sometimes the day to day reality does not match up to the image conveyed through high profile symbols. It is as if the high profile symbols are statements about how individuals would like to think of their organisation, how it could or should be, while the practical day to day reality is different. This alternative picture, the experience of what it is like to be part of the organisation, is conveyed through what can be termed low profile symbols. It is when high and low profile symbols are conveying different messages, when, for example, actions do not match statements, that members of the organisation can become cynical or disillusioned. This is the culture of the organisation and the notion of low profile symbols is an extension of the designers' view.

An individual, after having passed through the introductions and induction programmes, after having seen the public face of the organisation in the high profile symbols, will realise that in order to become part of the organisation, they will have to come to terms with the habits, conventions and customs of their colleagues; they will need to 'fit in', *Brown (1988) p. 107*. To do this they will have to discover the more informal ways in which the organisation works. The manner in which this occurs in the police service will be examined later in the chapter.

To summarise the meaning of the concept of corporate culture, it represents the understandings that individuals live by as members of the organisation; these understandings, it has been suggested, are carried in symbols which act as vehicles for meaning. In addition to specific meanings, individuals can also absorb other things characteristic of the culture - such as attitude and ways of thinking. Culture is something that is lived and reality may not always coincide with statements about the culture. It has also been suggested that a strong corporate culture results when individuals come to agree with the values of the organisation, but that these values cannot be imposed. The significance of this could be that these very symbols form the corporate image of the organisation.

**b) *Culture and its effect on image***

***Schein (1985)*** has described organisational culture as 'functional' and identifies some of the functions performed by it. These include obtaining and developing common understanding and communication with regard to mission, task, goals, evaluation and social relationships within an organisation. As such its function is all embracing.

It is possible that corporate image has an important role to play as an agent for managing, developing or changing corporate culture.

***Williams et al (1989)*** in describing 'new organisational approaches' to culture, quote corporate image programmes as one of the variety of methods available to actually



change culture. In describing culture as '*a pervasive influence on organisational behaviour*' they see culture as a significant determinant of organisational performance. Behaviour and performance will be inextricably linked with internal or external images of the organisation. Any attempts to 'change' culture by use of corporate image - or other methods - they emphasize must be led by organisational strategy. What they do stress, however, is that the role of change agents such as corporate image programmes are of 'critical importance'.

**Ind (1990)** too stresses the importance of cultural effects on corporate image. He states that while it is important to create a consistent design system within organisations, the true strength of corporate image will actually be determined by the acceptance of common values by the organisation's employees. Without what he describes as 'ownership', i.e. by employees, the high profile forms of communication will be undermined by the attitudes and actions of the same employees:

*"...Without employees commitment, an identity will lack validity..."*

**Ind (1990) p. 26**

**Balmer and Wilkinson (1991)** acknowledge that corporate image is of growing strategic importance particularly in the financial services industry. Their argument is that by simply adopting a design perspective to corporate image, that is, '*with too much emphasis being placed on the visual....and insufficient attention being given to people*', (p. 21), and therefore failing to address cultural issues, has meant that Building Societies' attempts to differentiate their corporate identity have failed.

*Morgan (1986)* demonstrates the advantages of taking a multi-perspective approach to the study of organisations including the influences of images on culture and culture on organisational images and effectiveness. He points to a significance that organisations are shaped by underlying images and ideas and that there is: '*....a close link between images and actions....*', p. 86.

There is a growing literature of relevance to understanding how organisations can be understood as cultural phenomenon, *Dore (1973)*; *Ouchi and Johnson (1978)*; *Ouchi (1980)*; *Pascale and Athos (1981)*; *Schein (1985)*. There is, however, only a limited analysis of how culture can affect images of organisations. Reference will now be made to two studies of the police, as well as an internal project developed from the work of *Olins (op. cit.)* by the Metropolitan Police, to illustrate how culture affects the police organisation and its image. Both studies and the project help clarify the cultural perspective of corporate image and some of the unique qualities of the field setting for this research - the police service. The studies are the works of *Fielding (1988)* and *McConville and Shepherd (1992)* and the project is named the *Plus Programme (1990)*.

**d) *The cultural perspective and the police***

*Fielding (1988)* followed through a sample of 125 male and female police recruits through their initial training, which is a two year probationary period and then the first year of service. The research methods included rating exercises, questionnaires, non-participant observation and interviews. Of the interviews *Fielding* comments:

*"...They offer data about the (Police) organisation which would not emerge from other sources...."* *p. 15*

Initially it was found that only a few of the recruits mentioned crime control compared to those who emphasised social service as the role of the police. However, following the '*police socialisation process*', while considerations of service still featured, it was noted that crime control and public order maintenance were increasingly seen by the rank and file as being of prime importance. This could also be described as an extension of Gestalt theory which takes as its basic tenet that the whole is different from the sum of its parts. Assumptions should not be made, therefore, that because an understanding can be gained of individuals within an organisation that an understanding is then gained of the whole organisation. However, the basic theory of Fielding, that recruits to the police organisation quickly become subsumed by the crime orientation of the culture, was also investigated and analysed during the course of this research.

Many of the criticisms and recommendations of Fielding, both implicit and explicit, especially regarding police training, which was seen as 'lagging far behind' that of other professions, have been addressed by the police service. For example, training now attends to definable and measurable activities; core skills and abilities have been identified; tutor constables now receive training for their role; and there is close monitoring of the whole of the two year probationary period of the constable. The training is, of course, the formal socialisation process into the police organisation, while the informal process occurs in contact with the culture of existing officers.

Fielding's work had implications for this research. The issues of training he identified will be addressed by conducting focus group interviews with those officers in the new probationary training system introduced since his work, and this may also facilitate comparisons between 'old and new' training. Additionally, the focus group interviews were carried out to elicit the strength or influence of the informal factors which Fielding believed undoubtedly affected behaviour.

In a recent research project carried out by *Gatewood et al (1993)* into the effect of corporate image on initial job choice decisions, some corollary can be made to Fielding's work, in terms of what the police corporate image actually is. From data collected from five student groups Gatewood found empirical support for *Rynes (1991)* suggestion that image is highly related to potential job applicants' intention to pursue further contact with an organisation. Overall, corporate image was linked positively to potential applicants' personal interaction with an organisation in the form of exposure to advertisements, use of products or services, and studying the organisation in class. What they felt was a 'major point of interest' was that their findings indicated that mere exposure to information is central to an individual's perception of image. As Fielding found that applicants to the police service emphasised the social function and role of the police, this may give some indication of the police corporate image as perceived by recruits. This presents something of a dilemma if the overall culture of the organisation is not one which gives emphasis to social work function and role. The logical assumption would be that a crime oriented culture would project a crime oriented corporate image.

The second study on police culture by *McConville and Shepherd (1992)* would indicate that, whatever changes have occurred in the training and management of police officers, community policing is:

*"...depicted as a great success by both government ministers and senior police officers is ultimately a myth... the police rank and file culture is hostile to community policing ideals...."*

*McConville and Shepherd (1992) p. 127*

Their, what they state are 'controversial findings', are based upon interviews with 206 serving police officers and observational work in three police force areas. The intention was to:

*"...look at the sociological meaning behind the consumer friendly image of the police service which emphasises accessibility, approachability and partnership...."*

*p. 31*

Their work did explore the effects the corporate culture exerts on everyday policing although not specifically how this culture affects the image of the service. One conclusion which will be further explored in this research, as it may be a prime determinant of the corporate image of the police, is that:

*"....A fundamental issue of police culture is that it is antipathetic towards the service model of policing, has little time for community policing ideals, and does not value community beat work..."*

*McConville and Shepherd (1992) p. 229*

If the customers of the police organisation, in broad terms, the general public, are demanding a service model of policing and are advocating community policing and officers on the beat, this mismatch between expectation and delivery of the required service will undoubtedly affect perceptions of the organisation.

Finally, the *Plus Programme* developed by the Metropolitan Police from the corporate identity report of the Wolff Olins company, further illustrates the cultural perspective of image in this unique field setting. The initial report of *Olins (1988 op. cit)* stressed the need for visual distinctiveness and consistency and, as such, emphasises the designers perspective of observing and analysing the tangible manifestations of identity. The project named the Plus Programme, however, in what is described as a 'programme of action', seeks to address the culture of the organisation through the visible identity.

To develop the Olins identity report into an action document addressing culture, the management of the Metropolitan Police engaged in a 60 week programme named 'Working Together for a Better Service', a series of seminars where over 36,000 employees discussed and adopted a 'Statement of Common Purpose and Values'. Nine key areas or components were identified as a vehicle for cultural change including internal and external communication and corporate identity improvements, all in line with

the *Olins'* identity findings (1988) op cit.

The components are specifically concerned with the visual appearance of the service and contain 45 recommendations which broadly groups concerns regarding: stationery, vehicles, uniform, appearance of stations and service logo.

While acknowledging that to some within the Metropolitan Police organisation the Plus programme may be viewed as a cosmetic identity project *Marnoch (1990)* stresses that:

*"...Plus is not just about image, Plus is about: a whole cultural shift, changing attitudes and behaviour; everyone in the organisation examining what they can do to improve service to the public and to each other; the whole organisation pulling together as one - corporacy...."*

*p. 39*

He further states that the aim of Plus, developed from *Olins'* work on identity, is to address the attitudes and behaviour of the people within the organisation as well as examining systems and procedures.

*Cullen (1990)* also links corporate identity and culture within the Plus programme. He affirms that the establishment of a clearly focused identity and culture with Plus is in many ways a holistic approach to best management practice. For example all the targeted component areas of the Plus programme are highlighted management issues such as communication, common purpose, performance indicators and so on. The one

component area which has yet to achieve prominence in current management literature, particularly the literature concerned with the management of change and culture, is the very one which was the catalyst to the whole Plus programme - the image and identity of the Metropolitan Police.

It should not be assumed that there is a single determinant or cause of organisational culture and behaviour. There are multiple determinants which act alone or with other determinants to produce behaviour. Furthermore, given that culture is likely to be all pervasive, it cannot be assumed that any single change mechanism, such as a corporate image programme, will be sufficient. If a corporate image programme were used in isolation as a change agent it would be likely merely to be subsumed under the prevailing culture of the organisation.

This appears to have occurred with the Plus Programme. It has emerged that, while the name of the Plus programme remains, the actual project has stalled. The initial team of officers driving the project was dissolved and the Commissioner of the force who originated the work retired:

*"... While officially, I suppose, the Programme is alive - as soon as the new Commissioner arrived the slogan went round the force 'Plus is dead'..."*

*Senior Manager 1995*

The in-force training department confirmed that the Plus Programme was now inert and only remained superficially on the training syllabus:



*"...There is nothing structured now, it has all disipated. We now give lessons on professionally based principles - which were at the heart of 'Plus' - but its only called 'Plus' on the timetable to probationers through tradition...."*

*Training Officer 1995*

Whether the original identity work of Olins and the development of the programme into the culture of the force has run its natural course and the initial usefulness is now exhausted is a moot point. No evaluation has been carried out on the success or otherwise of the programme. What is apparent is that the programme is no longer on the 'agenda' of the force even though the principles espoused of good management and clear communication remain.

*e) Summary of role of culture*

While the concept of corporate culture has been around for some time, the notion of managing the culture is relatively new and somewhat controversial. Culture management refers to the manipulation of an organisations goals, rituals and values that together characterises the organisation's style of operation, for the purpose of improving the organisation's productivity or service.

The interest in corporate culture is based on the belief that not only does it exist, but also that it is possible for management to affect its strength, direction and values content. The

culture advocates of corporate image argue that the stimulus to culture change can be provided by the focus that corporate image offers.

*Dowling (1993)* argues that to develop corporate image into a corporate asset a variety of approaches must be adopted to integrate the organisations internal activities and co-ordinate external communications. The approaches differ mainly in how executives use corporate culture to design a desired image and get the commitment of managers and employees.

Three studies involving the culture of the police service have been examined. The strength of the working police culture has been identified and there appears an issue regarding the role of the service from within the organisation. Furthermore, a programme involving an initial identity project followed by a cultural programme has floundered in the operational setting of the police service.

It must be restated that corporate image is now a generic term referring to a family of concepts and theories which each have an individual form and where exactly corporate image fits within all the interdisciplinary fields it covers, remains unclear. The basic assumption is that cultural factors influence corporate image perception and that corporate image programmes can facilitate corporate change. These assumptions will be explored and investigated in this research and thesis.

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **Methodological issues: focus groups**

### **a) *Introduction***

This chapter examines the issues and arguments behind the choice of research strategy. The use of interview and focus group techniques in particular is examined and considered in depth. The justification for the general approach of using focus groups, and specifically within them projective techniques, is given in the chapter in terms of the subject being investigated, that is, corporate image. This focus group methodology is seen as central to the research and subsequent thesis.

### **b) *Fieldwork - the development of the methodology***

The broad, initial research questions for this thesis to address were stated in Chapter 1 (p.7 ante). From a critical analysis of the literature in the previous chapters the primary research questions were then developed. These are:

- ▶ what are the influences on Durham Constabulary corporate image?
- ▶ what are the prevalent cultures of Durham Constabulary?

- ▶ what impact, if any, may these cultures have on the image of the organisation?
- ▶ is a corporate image programme merely jargon or could it be good management practice for Durham Constabulary?

The most vital question then arose; how best to research these primary questions, bearing in mind the need to show a demonstrably valid methodology. While there is a large body of knowledge and research on the interdisciplinary areas surrounding corporate image - for example marketing, public relations, advertising and corporate culture - the same cannot be said about corporate image itself. There is little direct data on corporate image, even less that looks at the subject from a research perspective, but, as has been previously stated, much anecdotal and case study work from the viewpoint of designers exists. *Ind (1990)* remarked:

*"....I quickly realised that even if corporate identity has moved from the design media on to the pages of the national press, there was very little of any substance written on it .... the literature on the subject is sparse and, such as there is, is anecdotal. As yet, there seems to have been no systematic analysis of the way corporate identity works or is managed..."*

*p. 7*

The approach adopted for this research was first of all to undertake a literature review in three main areas; marketing, corporate image and corporate culture; then to initially

conduct preliminary interviews using staff from within the police organisation. During these preliminary interviews in Greater Manchester and County Durham to 'get a feel' of the subject and respondents' views of it, it quickly became clear that lack of knowledge, interest and previous thought about corporate image was likely to be a problem. An appropriate methodology would therefore have to be broad based in 'real' world conditions rather than a laboratory controlled experimental design with manipulation of independent variables. Additionally, having interviewed, and been present at lectures given by, leading exponents in the field of corporate image it was also clear that corporate image is characterised by its interdisciplinary nature and therefore a holistic approach was necessary.

*c) Fieldwork - the development as a result of preliminary individual interviews*

Initially individual exploratory interviews were conducted with a cross section of staff in both Greater Manchester Police and Durham Constabulary; Greater Manchester being a large metropolitan Police service; Durham being a smaller, more rural, area, is policed by a small county police service.

The initial research directly affected the choice of research methodology and consequently it is worthwhile, briefly, to refer to it at this juncture.

From the preliminary fieldwork three critical points emerged:

- ▶ There is not open communication between the ranks in the service and a climate of fear exists to the extent that criticism of others is normally kept within specific ranks.
  
- ▶ The culture of the police service is also a one with a crime orientation rather than a public service perspective.
  
- ▶ Respondents answered questions about corporate image with an apparent confidence that disguised an almost total lack of consideration of the subject. They appeared to share a 'what everybody knows' stereotype of the use of the word image and while holding views on the image of different organisations were perhaps unaware of the concept of corporate image.

Additionally, the research problem did not appear to lend itself to statistical analysis. This is because of both the dynamics of the work setting and the feasibility of eliciting objective, reliable answers to the questions posed. This was particularly relevant as the subject of corporate image is in itself largely undefined and appeared concerned with perceptions, based on attitudes and beliefs. It therefore seemed unrealistic - with the purpose being to obtain insights into the subject - to expect valid, reliable data, for example, from a questionnaire. Finally, there is insufficient theory on corporate image to guide quantitative work; therefore this research is exploratory in nature.

d) *Methodology - the decisions and rationale behind the choice*

The police organisation is a traditional pyramidal hierarchy carrying out specified functions in defined relationships with colleagues. These relationships, and the tasks involved, are specified in immense detail. It is, in effect, quasi-military. There is a strict rank structure that can act as a constraint to openness and frank communication.

*Butler (1992)* refers to an alienation between street police culture and senior officers and a conflict between senior and middle management:

*"....Peer and group solidarity are powerful features of the police occupational culture...."* *p. 138*

This accords with the work of *Reuss-Ianni (1983)* who similarly found two cultures of policing. The author held an 'inside' knowledge of police systems, procedures and management, and in order to ensure that accurate reports were received from those interviewed, rather than self reports filtered through a variety of defence mechanisms, including those of rank and departmental sub-cultures, the usual tools of quantitative research appeared inadequate.

In fact, historically, researchers have found that the more appropriate and less constrained methodologies of qualitative research offer a valuable perspective on gaining knowledge and providing insights into understanding concepts with limited theoretical

foundation. Additionally, the literature review and preliminary fieldwork suggested that the subject to be investigated, corporate image and the police, was concerned with the attitudes, values and beliefs of the individuals making up the corporate culture. It appeared that the attitudes, values, beliefs and culture impacted on overt behaviour which could then influence any image projected or even hoped for.

Several relevant strategies for investigating concepts concerned with organisations have been used successfully in the past by researchers and these include; participant observation, direct/structured observation, personal interviews and questionnaire survey methods. There are advantages and disadvantages in all research strategies. On the one hand small numbers of respondents investigated in depth over time might yield valuable qualitative material and insights - but problems of generality, validity and reliability would have to be faced. On the other hand a large questionnaire survey would provide quantitative data which possibly could be investigated statistically - but such research would necessitate adopting a clear cut perspective at the outset and would be primarily a verification rather than an exploratory study.

The approach adopted was to initially conduct preliminary interviews. From these interviews a guide and framework or structure could be devised for use in focus group interviews across a representative sample of police employees.

The term 'focus group' interviews refers to a meeting of a group of voluntary respondents who take part in an open discussion facilitated by one person. The term is



sometimes referred to as 'group depth' interviews. The discussions are intended to stimulate respondents to make relatively unguarded comments which directly reflect unconscious determinants of behaviour.

Use of the focus group technique is widespread in marketing research. It is used to generate hypotheses about consumer behaviour and is generally exploratory in nature. It is also used to help gain insights and understanding of consumers. The marketing research approach of focus groups is neatly encapsulated by *Axelrod's (1975)* description of them, they are:

*"....A chance to experience a flesh and blood consumer. It is the opportunity for the client to put himself in the position of the consumer and to be able to look at his product and his category from her vantage point...."*

*p. 6*

What the focus group is generally agreed to be achieving in marketing research is an insight into the everyday knowledge and experience of the consumer.

More recently focus groups have become more widely used as a new way of gathering qualitative data in academic research, *Morgan (1988), Krueger (1988), Aed (1989), Patton (1990)*. They are now accepted as a versatile, valid and reliable research methodology. It was intended to use police focus groups to elicit underlying attitudes, values and beliefs together with organisational norms and culture - of respondents, as

well as espoused views, norms and experience, to identify the critical elements influencing corporate image and perhaps organisational effectiveness..

As the preliminary individual interviews (pp. 94-95 ante) revealed that officers had difficulty in articulating their ideas and thoughts on corporate image and because some will only be held at a sub-conscious level, stimuli labelled projective and enabling techniques were incorporated into the methodology. This involved respondents in a comfortable medium of drawing - without feeling threatened or challenged and revealing both at a manifest and latent level their views on the subject area. The value of such projective and enabling techniques has been widely recognised in psychology and is only now being used in other disciplines, *Gordon and Langmaid (1988); Patton (1990)*; for reasons given by *Oppenheim (1992)*:

*"If we want to stay at a relatively superficial level, then direct techniques for attitude measurement such as the various types of attitude scales, ratings and rankings, grids and indices can be used to advantage....if however we have to penetrate deeper, perhaps below the level of conscious awareness or behind the individual's social facade, then indirect, projective techniques have to be used".* p. 210

A full description of the techniques used will be given later in this chapter.

While the main body of the analysis comes from these focus group interviews, observational and diary notes were made throughout, especially where these were thought to be relevant to corporate image considerations. It is felt that this strategy was not only a reasonable one but a central one to the research. It avoids some of the fixed viewpoints of questionnaire research, which is arguably inappropriate bearing in mind the culture of the organisation and the current state of knowledge of the topic. At the same time it enabled a good measure of comparison to be made between the ranks of the service most in contact with the public, thus improving the generality of the findings.

Additionally, while it would have been possible to investigate those components and influences of police corporate image which were outlined in the design perspective - i.e. communication, public image and environmental influences, (Chapter Three, pp. 39-43 ante), by quantitative measures - it was envisaged that the three components and influences from the cultural perspective, (Chapter Four, p. 73 ante), would have been much more difficult to elicit by constrained methodologies.

In the event, it is believed that the information coming from the focus groups has enabled the construction of a conceptual framework which may be a useful starting point for other studies using different methods. An additional consideration was that some of the strengths and weaknesses of focus group methodology are discussed in the following sections.

e) *Methodological issues: strengths and weaknesses of focus groups*

*"...Faced with the controversial literature surrounding qualitative methods in general, and focus groups in particular, the postgraduate researcher, working within the constraints of time and budget in the completion of a thesis, understandably turns away from such techniques..."*

*Drayton et al (1989) p. 34*

The author chose not to turn away from the technique of focus groups but to examine the techniques, strengths and weaknesses and then evaluate its relevance to the research into corporate image. The views of practitioners of focus groups, both in academia and market research neatly sum up the controversy surrounding the technique:

*"...The group discussion technique can be a very useful research tool, but it is important to be aware of its limitations as well as its strong points..."*

*Falconer (1976) p. 21*

*"...How can anything so bad be so good?..."*

*Mendes de Almedia (1980) p. 114*

The issues surrounding the strengths and weaknesses of the focus group methodology, which are, of course, inextricably linked are now examined.



f) *Methodological issues: sample types and size*

One of the most repeated criticisms of focus group methodology is that of sample size and sample 'representativeness'.

*"...Group interviews cannot be conducted with large samples of the population.....one must therefore assume that whatever is being investigated is so uniformly distributed that it does not matter much where one dips into the population or that crude attempts at stratification - such as pre-screening respondents on education and age - will pick up all of the variation that is really important. Both these assumptions are questionable and, at times, very wrong...."*

*Wells (1974) p. 135*

Sample size and sampling procedure, as well as the methods of collection, will undoubtedly have a great impact on the statistical reliability and validity of the findings. Therefore this had to be analysed in great depth.

Focus groups use small samples; but can use several groups. Generally it is accepted that the group size itself should be between a minimum of six and a maximum of twelve respondents, *Goldman (1962); Mendes de Almedia (1980); Wells (1974); Cox et al (1976); Drayton et al (1989)*. The smaller the number in the group the less the

generation of discussion and a higher risk environment. The larger the number in the group the more difficult it is to manage by the facilitator or moderator and certain respondents may not contribute. However, there are two, fairly obvious, conflicting tendencies in group size; the larger the group, the greater the diversity of talent skills and abilities; and the larger the group the less chance of an individual participating. In fact, participation in larger groups does not diminish uniformly in proportion to the group size. Some people talk more easily than others in groups and individuals have different thresholds of participation - *Handy (1993)*

The sample issue was then one of the prime methodological considerations. The total population of police officers in Durham Constabulary is 1379. To ensure that the sample size was at least one which could be classed as representative of size alone, (the question of category or rank representation will be addressed shortly), it was decided to run a series of focus groups each consisting of between eight and fourteen respondents. A total of one hundred and four individual officers took part in the focus group discussions. Initially two further 'pilot' groups were formed to obtain further insights into the technique and allow for an initial evaluation of the validity.

*Mendes de Almedia (1980)* argues that researchers cannot consider the participants in a focus group as individuals in a sample. In other words the group is a unit of the sample and not the individual persons in the group:

*"....A research project with, say, four meetings, is based on a sample of four 'individuals', irrespective of the number of persons who have participated in the discussions...."* *p. 115*

The rationale for this perspective is that individual opinions are in some way subsumed by the interaction and artificiality of the group situation.

Both *Lipstein (1975)* and *Cooper and Branthwaite (1977)* conclude that the increase of sample size does not necessarily increase reliability because other sources of error are inevitably introduced. They point out that a trade-off exists between sampling and non sampling errors. As the sample size increases the sample error decreases, but at the same time the non sampling errors increase, for example, coding respondent and interviewer fatigue.

*Calder (1977)* describes the worries about the sample size of focus groups as a '*vague sense of uneasiness*' mainly because research has an image of being 'scientific'. There does appear to be a perception that quantitative research is in someway more respectable, more precise and more readily analysed by computers and summarised tables. But what are the differences? Quality is the essential character or nature of something; quantity is the amount. Quality is the what; quantity the how much. Or as *Van Maanen et al (1982)* describes it:

*"...qualitative refers to the meaning while quantitative assumes the meaning and refers to a measure of it..."* *p. 31*

There is also a strong argument that the group setting elicits more precise views from the respondents:

*"...Groups often provoke considerable greater spontaneity and candour than can be expected in an individual interview..." Goldman (1962) p.67*

Whatever the merits or otherwise of larger sample size this study involved one hundred and four respondents if one includes each group member or ten respondents if each of the ten focus group sessions is viewed as a 'collective whole'.

The representativeness of the sample can also be an issue with focus groups. In some other organisations it is necessary to categorise respondents in order to reflect true representation. This aspect of sampling is described by *Glaser and Strauss (1968)*:

*"...The researcher chooses groups that will help generate, to the fullest possible extent, as many of the properties of the categories as possible, and that will help relate categories to each other and to their properties..."* *p. 52*



In the police organisation categorisation is to an extent already established in that there are tiered categories of ranks. In Durham Constabulary the representation of the hierarchy is as follows:

|                            |        |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Chief Constable            | (1)    |
| Deputy Chief Constable     | (1)    |
| Assistant Chief Constables | (1)    |
| Chief Superintendents      | (3)    |
| Superintendents            | (16)   |
| Chief Inspectors           | (18)   |
| Inspectors                 | (76)   |
| Sergeants                  | (215)  |
| Constables                 | (1057) |

It can be seen that the lower three ranks (Inspector, Sergeant and Constables) comprise over 97.3% of the total population. Additionally, the same three ranks are those who on a day to day basis are the ones in direct contact with the external customer of the police service - the general public. The 'intangibility' of the service provided by the police (as opposed to product or 'goods' supplied) means that greater responsibility for projecting the organisation or service lies with the personal contact that these ranks have with the general public.

Corporate image determinants as identified by *Dowling (1986)* and *Kennedy (1977)*, point to the significance of the personal contact of these employees with 'customers'. Moreover:

*"....A police force is perhaps the ultimate service activity...each contact with a police force largely depends on the behaviour of an individual officer...."*

*Olins (1994) p. 34*

It was therefore decided to target the focus groups at the constable, sergeant and Inspector ranks - the vast majority of Durham Constabulary and those almost exclusively concerned with direct service provision. To further minimise potential sources of representative error one focus group consisted of a sample of the Special Constabulary - members of the public who on a part time voluntary basis perform the duties of the regular Constabulary. One group of the Special Constabulary was also used at the 'pilot' stage as mentioned previously, (p. 103 ante).

The subject of recruitment of respondents in the police setting also eliminated some of the potential issues - but did give rise to others! There are two main sources of standards of recruitment to focus groups in the United Kingdom. One is published by the Market research Society and the other by the Association of Users of Research Agencies. Both are concerned with dealing with minimum standards of recruitment, summarised by *Feldwick and Winstanley (1986)* headings concerned with volunteer bias, previous

knowledge of the subject, technique or interviewer, and that the respondents should meet quota requirements i.e. true representation.

Several of the sources of error were immediately eliminated, for example, none of the group participants were in their words '*professional attendees*', nor, in my opinion were they '*gregarious, hard up and generally eccentric*'(!). There could be some criticism that a source of error may have arisen from a pre-existing group norm and by the fact that certain of the respondents knew me. However, my training as a facilitator and previous background, (see later this chapter and in a reflexive account of the author's role in the process contained in Chapter Eleven post), went some way to minimise or possibly eliminate this source of error.

The groups consisted of Constables, Sergeants and Inspectors undergoing different types of training at Police H.Q. Aykley Heads, Durham. Each focus group session was held outside of normal curriculum time. This was an attempt to break down any formality and to indicate that the purpose of the discussion was not a training one.

The ranks of those involved were not mixed for each interview to encourage candour and provide a low risk environment. This, as has been previously stated, was an important methodological consideration as the rigid rank structure of the police service and its culture does not encourage frank communication.

The age range of respondents was between 18 years and 50 years. The ratio of male to female respondents was representative of the service as a whole and reflected the overall proportions currently serving in Durham Constabulary i.e. approximately 8% female officers.

The sample design therefore took into account all the important variables; total population size, representative of rank structure, age and sex.

**g) *Methodological issues: objectivity, reliability and validity***

The other major criticism of the focus group methodology can be grouped as concerns regarding objectivity, validity and reliability.

First of all, as *Drayton et al (1989)* state, '*the interviewer (moderator/facilitator) is in a unique position to bias the results*', (p. 37). *Kennedy (1976)* in an article on such bias listed three major sources of bias which threaten objectivity. These are:

*"...1. personal assumptions*

*2. client expectations, and*

*3. the need for consistency...."*

*p. 20*

While to achieve complete objectivity as an interviewer may be a lofty ideal *Cox et al (1976) and Kennedy (1976)* advocate adequate training of interviewers to reduce bias.

The author did possess some instructional and interviewer skills but nevertheless enrolled on a full time national course for trainers and national evaluators between September and December 1990 and subsequently qualified. The core elements of the course were interview skills, questioning and listening skills and the use of non-verbal communication. These were focused in a range of interview situations. Also particular emphasis was placed on facilitation techniques in training or group situations with groups of twelve students. Employment and classroom experience as a trainer throughout the research period has also developed these skills. This allows in the focus group situation non-directive participation and the moderation of 'leader' bias in stronger members of the group, while facilitating the involvement of quieter individuals.

On the concern regarding consistency there is little doubt that the use of a questionnaire survey provides a more easily standardised and uniform approach than the use of focus group interviews. However, these standardised questions and instructions of questionnaires may not be understood by those answering; there is no control over the sequence of answering the questions; or influence of other people on clarification or develop answers. The use of groups can focus attention on the central issues and respondents can, as well as entering into discourse with the researcher, give more thought to the issues than is often possible in a questionnaire. Consistency can be achieved by structuring the discussion to maintain the topic relevance. Structuring, sequencing and setting the bounds of the discussion may nonetheless effect the data generated and must also be addressed.

If the interviewer's plan is to tightly structure the group discussion with fixed, specific questions, then the group discussion is little more than administering of a questionnaire to several individuals simultaneously. Much of the value of the group interaction and dynamics is lost and it could lead to frustration of the respondents who would be continually directed to the series of questions to be asked.

If the interviewer's plan is to be totally unstructured, facilitating a discussion with non specific, open ended questions then there is every likelihood the discussion will drift into irrelevance. A compromise solution, which retains the value of the group methodology yet can maintain an agenda, is to plan a partially structured focus group by using a flexible guide. This has the advantage of guiding the interview into specific areas, while retaining the flexibility to encourage respondents to reveal their own thoughts, attitudes, belief and behaviour. This methodology was used in all the focus group discussions in this research.

By using an overview and discussion guide which contained an outline of general questioning areas it was intended to tease out responses specific to the issues. The Qualitative Research Council offer similar guidance in running focus group discussions:

*"....Generally it is best to prepare a discussion guide listing questions or topic areas rather than specific questions. This does not mean that the interviewer will not ask the respondent specific questions. But by dealing with general topics, the interviewer has the flexibility of altering*

*questions patterns to follow up on unanticipated responses or to abandon question areas which appear to be eliciting useful information...."* *Qualitative Research Council (1985) p. 49*

The overview and discussion guide used during the research are included in Appendices 1 and 2, (pp. 393-394 post)

The source of the topic areas or areas of questioning were derived from those major influences on corporate image identified in the preceding chapters. It can be seen that the questions are not a list; as again this format would have a tendency to impose structure and constraint on the discussion. The guide served as an outline plan which was developed both from an analysis of the literature on the influences impacting on corporate image and from the two pilot focus groups. What the guide did ensure was that there was a consistency of approach throughout all the group discussions.

***h) The methods of data collection in focus group fieldwork***

Another potential criticism on the validity of the focus group methodology is the introduction of bias in the analysis of the data collected:

*"....A requirement of the group depth interview is that the often voluminous data be intensively analysed. Discussion material of this kind defies routine analysis...."* *Goldman (1962) p. 62*

To minimise the amount of bias as much as possible, and thus achieve greater validity, different techniques were used to record the information. These techniques, their advantages and disadvantages, had been experienced as part of the evaluation training the author had attended. A structured interview, using pre-planned questions with simple answers, is easy to record. Conversations in partially structured interviews are more difficult. The ways of recording information in this research, with advantages and disadvantages, included the following methods.

1. *Note taking.*

Perhaps the most common and sometimes successful method of recording conversations in partially structured interviews is the taking of notes. If key words are written during the interview these may be expanded soon afterwards. A copy of the expanded notes can be given to the respondents interviewed for checking and further comment. In practice this method is extremely difficult to adopt. The interviewer becomes involved in the content of the discussion and process of the group interaction and it is easy to overlook recording important issues. Expanding the notes afterwards can also introduce bias as there can be a tendency to record only what the interviewer wished to hear. This method was only attempted on one occasion during the pilot survey and because of the difficulties of recording and problems of expanding the notes was not used again.



## 2. *Audio recording.*

Sound recording has the advantage of providing a complete record of the focus group interview. However, it may inhibit some individuals, and full transcription, while a more accurate record of the discussion, is very time consuming. Another disadvantage with this method is that examples were found where it was found very difficult to transcribe due to two or three respondents speaking at the same time. Also when listening to the recording, it is possible to select relevant parts for full transcription, but if doing this, care has to be taken not to unconsciously bias or distort the information. (Again it is very easy to hear only what is expected, or hoped for.) This method of recording the focus groups on audio tape followed by transcription was used in eight of the ten discussions. The respondents were very familiar with the recording of classroom activity and did not appear inhibited at all by the method.

## 3. *Video recording.*

Video recording allows additional information, such as non verbal communication, to be recorded. It has the advantages of sound recording but it is even more difficult, practically, due to constant winding and rewinding, to transcribe. The groups used were again very familiar with the video recording of classroom discussions, the video camera is in fact permanently sited in each classroom and its impact appeared minimal. This method of recording information was used on two of the focus group discussions.

So that the value of non-verbal expression was not lost during audio recording, if the communication was particularly relevant, the author verbalised the expression. For

example, *'I see that you are frowning at the last comment John?'* It was then possible to contextualise the recorded conversations from the audio tape.

The written transcript accounts of the focus group interviews were content analysed individually and in groups at various stages of the analysis as the author sought categories of factors and other patterns in the data. As a result of the ongoing analysis, different techniques within the focus group methodology were introduced and these will be described in a following section of this chapter on *'predictive and enabling techniques'*.

*i) The reliability of the focus group methodology*

Validity is the degree to which the methodology measures what it purports to measure; reliability is the degree to which the information produced is representative of the population to which it is generalised. While focus groups, used extensively in market research on consumers, produce information, it was important to establish that the findings of the focus groups in this research were also representative of the views of all.

*"....When we come up with a finding in a field study, we quickly assume it to be typical, representative, an instance of a general phenomenon. But is it? And if it is, how representative?...."*

*Miles and Hubermann (1984) p. 102*

In his critique of all types of interviews as a research tool *Kitwood (1977)* draws attention to the conflict it generates between the traditional concepts of reliability and validity. Where increased reliability of the interview is brought about by greater control of its elements, this is achieved, he argues, at the cost of reduced validity. He explains:

*"...In proportion to the extent to which reliability is enhanced by rationalisation, validity would decrease. For the main purpose of using an interview in research is that it is believed that in an interpersonal encounter people are more likely to disclose aspects of themselves, their thoughts, their feelings and values than they would in a less human situation..... the distinctly human element in the interview is necessary to its validity. The more the interviewer becomes rational, calculating and detached, the less likely the interview is to be perceived as a friendly transaction, and the more calculated the response is likely to be...." p. 74*

As this research was concerned with gaining insights into the respondents' attitudes, values and beliefs; and as the concept of corporate image is virtually unknown to the police organisation; it was necessary to maintain the openness and flexibility of the focus group interview without the imposition of a strict action plan of questions.

Reliability implies that if the same survey was conducted with another sample from a totally different population, the results would, essentially, be the same. The method of sampling would therefore have to be identical - the same set of questions asked in the

same way. Focus group methodology do not, and are designed not, to operate in this way - which is probably why there is criticism of its reliability:

*"...There is no way in which group discussions, or any other types of qualitative research, can lead to statements about the extent to which the opinions elicited are likely to be found in the population at large..."*

*Falconer (1976) p. 30*

This is an extreme view as qualitative research does provide insights and generate theory. There are also studies which negate, or limit, criticisms such as Falconer's:

*"...Generally speaking we regard a survey which asks a large number of people the same questions in precisely the same way, as more statistically reliably but potentially less valid than a qualitative study which asks a small number of people similar questions in somewhat different ways...."*

*Goldman and McDonald (1987) p. 51*

For the type of problem studied, which is the most crucial point, some researchers have found that qualitative and quantitative results are closely comparable if not identical, for example, *Cooper and Branthwaite (1978)*. While it may be true that groups can be better than surveys *in some fields*, it should be stressed that the topic being researched is critical and crucial to the consideration. For corporate image, a concept as stated largely

undefined, an exploratory approach as given by focus groups - offering insights into the topic - was considered the most valuable, relevant tool.

Comparative work involving quantitative and qualitative research illustrating, to some extent, the validity and reliability of focus groups in exploratory research was carried out by *Reynolds and Johnson (1978)*. Their commercial research into food shopping, food preparation and nutrition, consisted of two studies. The first qualitative study consisted of twenty focus groups; the second quantitative study was a nineteen page questionnaire to a population of two thousand. The results obtained were comparable - although, of course, one could not prove the other:

*"....In only one comparable instance were qualitative and quantitative finding not in accord. In this one instance later sales data showed the qualitative finding to be the more accurate...."* p. 23

This led the authors, somewhat tongue in cheek, to conclude:

*"....In fact, we believe that it would not be unreasonable that reports of questionnaire surveys begin with the disclaimer 'Warning: this study was purely quantitative. Findings should not be considered conclusive without confirmation from focus groups'...."* p. 24

It would, however, be invalid to assume that the methodologies justify each other. What should be stressed is that quantitative and qualitative research can be complementary; they can give different perspectives of the same subject.

*j) The appropriateness of focus group methodology*

In order to address the questions of corporate image which were central to the research, (pp. 92-93 ante), it was necessary to explore the attitudes and beliefs of officers within the organisation to learn how these may affect the overt behaviour and thus the corporate image of the organisation. The rationale for this was described in full in the preceding chapters but, simply stated, it was that in order to create an organisational environment with a clear, consistently portrayed, positive image a suitable culture is necessary. The chosen methodology was certainly appropriate in terms of access and convenience to the target population, the author was in a training department with free access to changing groups of officers of all ranks, but the prime consideration was how appropriate the methodology was to the subject being researched.

Some problems do not lend themselves easily to quantification. Certainly factors affecting attitudes and corporate culture come into this category. To explore, often unconscious, values requires a different approach. As early as 1962 *Goldman* was reporting instances of focus groups being used to research questions of social problems, political issues and attitudes. Since that time focus groups have been used in a broad

range of subject areas, but there does appear to be a consensus of its particular value as a methodology in gaining understanding of behaviour:

*"...Success was dependent on obtaining a clear, in-depth understanding of target group attitudes and behaviour. This requirement determined the use of small group discussions, which is particularly suitable for investigating research issues of this type (health/social)...."*

*Blinkhorn, Hastings and Leathar (1983) p. 311*

In a review of small group theories, *Fern (1881)* describes several reasons 'why focus groups work', including the explanation that the group provides security to respondents, and that a norm is created allowing individuals to speak out, and that enthusiasm of the interviewer stimulates participants. He does, however, conclude that further research should be done into the assumption that:

*"...The more familiar the group members are with the discussion topic, the more spontaneous and uninhibited will be the participation in the presence of others; and the less familiar the group members are with the discussion topic, the more they will resort to story telling and other irrelevant conversation...."*

*Fern (1981) p. 9*

The focus groups used in this research were unfamiliar with the discussion topic of corporate image. This may then, according to Fern, have been problematic. However, as

the research was concerned with revealing the underlying attitudes and views of the respondents, not specifically about the subject of corporate image the methodology was appropriate.

*Mendes de Almedia (1980)* was critical of the use of groups where participants had some common values or 'prevalidated ideas'. This is because established norms in the group can act as a constraint to interaction and frankness of exchange of views. However, in the subject of corporate image, where one of the determinants of that image is the organisational culture, it is those shared or common values which are being explored. These may not, of course, have been the same as the group norms. In other circumstances previous contact of 'affiliated' participants would have influenced the vulnerability of the method.

Nevertheless, it was discovered in the pilot groups that unfamiliarity of the subject of corporate image raised questions by the respondents of what they were contributing to. To resolve this a broad outline of the area of corporate image was given prior to the full group discussion. It was appreciated how this may have affected the ensuing discussion, so particular care was given to the statements made - in terms of being value free and general in nature. These were given in the form of a standard overview (included at Appendix 1, p. 393 post). The overview, which served as the introduction to the sessions, was given verbally at each group meeting to ensure consistency.



k) *Methodological issues: the use of projective and enabling techniques*

One of the great advantages of the focus group methodology is the flexibility of the technique. This proved an asset to the research in terms of both providing a stimulus for discussion and, more importantly, revealing deeply held views of the respondents. In particular the use of 'projective and enabling' techniques are now described.

Projective and enabling techniques are similar and have been described as:

*"....identical in that their main aim is to facilitate the deeper exploration of a persons feelings about a situation, product or type of activity...."*

*Gordon and Langmaid (1988) p. 201*

Projective and enabling techniques are procedures which permit an opportunity for respondents to complete a task which reveal underlying characteristics of respondents and unconscious, as well as conscious, attitudes and beliefs. Examples are word association tasks; sentence or drawing completion tasks; choice ordering tasks; and expressive procedures such as drawing or modelling. The technique used in this research was drawing which Gordon and Langmaid described as, '*looking through the respondents eyes is the key to understanding*', (p. 207 *op cit*).

All groups develop norms, including common beliefs and social behaviour, and especially share ways of doing or thinking about the main group activity, *Argyle (1994) p. 169*.

Homogeneity tends, in general, to promote satisfaction and people who are similar in their attitudes, values and beliefs tend to form more stable groups, (*Handy (1993) p. 159*). To elicit some of the group norms and individual and collective attitudes, values and beliefs a predictive technique of drawing was used:

*"....Projective techniques can be particularly useful in evoking and outlining stereotypes, self images and norm precepts...."*

*Oppenheim (1992) p. 210*

By using the technique of drawing what was being used by the author was an ambiguous stimuli where the respondents were unaware of what they were revealing until it was discussed by them and with them in the focus group discussion which followed. This had the advantage of overcoming barriers caused by the cultural context of the officers in the organisation.

*"....There is a measure of complicity (in the police service) which ensures that any 'inside' revelation will be kept to a minimum; for the publication of any research will inevitably reveal warts and all on the face of the organisation and fly in the face of the cardinal rule of an institution of power which demands that any commentary on its activities will emanate from the top and in general is not supportive of radicalism or massive cultural change...."*

*Young (1991) p. 395*

As a result of substantial work into organisational cultures, in both public and private sectors, *McLean and Marshall (1988)*, developed projective technique worksheets for discovering the '*...complex, multi-layered conflicts and dilemmas of organisational culture....*', p. 10.

Following analysis of the initial, pilot focus group interviews it became increasingly apparent police corporate culture had strong implications to the police corporate image projected. It was therefore necessary to elicit underlying attitudes, values, beliefs, and standards which were significant in forming the various cultures of the police organisation. It was at this point that one of the 'Cultures at Work' projective drawing technique worksheets, originally devised by *McLean and Marshall (op. cit)*, was introduced to the focus group discussions, (see Appendix 3, p. 395 post). The worksheet was specifically designed to obtain data on culture but was adapted to the context of the police organisation by using police specific terminology. For example, (to respondents), 'think about your own police shift, section or department and find an image that captures something of the identity of the department - draw the image'.

From the initial drawing of images of the respondents' own departments - and others with whom they had important relationships - they were further asked to use descriptive words on the same sheets to describe their images drawn. Each respondent then exhibited their drawings, and the group interpreted what they believed the drawings revealed, before the 'artist' clarified the actual meaning of the images. These reactions of others, unprompted by the individual 'artist' can be especially illuminating since they

interpret the artists efforts in ways that they possibly did not intend. Following the clarification, and at times attempts at justification, by the artist, these interpretations and intentions then became a catalyst for the whole group discussion. This methodology is standard to the field of psychology.

The use of such a predictive and enabling technique had the problem of lengthening the time for each group by over one hour, due to the time taken for the task and ensuing discussion, but the data gathered was such that the time element was of minor importance. At the beginning of the focus groups it was established that there were no time constraints on the group discussion. Additionally, it was stressed before commencement, that any respondents who wished to leave during the task or discussion process were entitled to leave.

#### ***1) Summary of methodological issues***

Several alternative research strategies and their associated characteristics have been examined in the context of the research into corporate image. A research methodology was adopted which involved a series of focus group interviews across a broad, representative sample of Durham Constabulary.

The open and flexible structure of focus group technique gives greater latitude in the way questions are phrased and, perhaps more importantly, it allows respondents the same degree of latitude and flexibility in the way they respond. Relatively simple answers

to a questionnaire, though not inaccurate, are limited statements of 'fact' whose main strength is that they can be counted and replicated. Such research fails, however, to capture the wealth of information behind the 'facts' and processes - the factors which shaped the answers to the questions.

Additionally, the projective and enabling technique used of drawings overcame possible initial difficulties regarding lack of knowledge regarding the subject area and also potential cultural barriers:

*"....Interactive designs may increase the validity of data and reduce reactivity by making the research less intrusive and making subjects or clients less resistant or suspicious...."* *Patton (1990) p. 346*

The aim has not been to describe some 'perfect' methodology, but rather to indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the method and the techniques used to minimise errors or omissions.

*"....The drawbacks and limitations of this method of research are well documented. Focus groups have been questioned on the grounds of both reliability and validity. Used for the first time by a post graduate researcher, however, it is believed that the errors can be mitigated to some extent by rigorous sampling, honest recruiting, and careful interviewing...."* *Drayton et al (1989) p. 50*

The focus group methodology using predictive and enabling techniques is seen as both valid, and central, to this research into corporate image.

# CHAPTER SIX

## What policing is all about: catching criminals?

### a) *Introduction*

This chapter focuses on the context of the research effort; the corporate image and culture of Durham Constabulary. Much has been written about the police, both attitudes from within and attitudes towards. The public stereotype the police and the police stereotype the public. The stereotyping creates images and influences behaviour.

Historically, the public has come to expect many services from the police that have nothing to do with law enforcement. However, if police officers regard their prime function as that of law enforcement, particularly with regard to crime, this can be to the detriment of performing the other service functions expected by the public. If the police are to meet the expectations of the public and provide a much broader service than mere law enforcement then this ethic must be recognised by the operational officer. This review of the policing context may reveal that there are cultural characteristics within Durham Constabulary and the police service that are both a barrier to this recognition and that the same culture influences the overall corporate image projected by the organisation.

**b) *Police Corporate Image - the context***

Police images, like that of any organisation, are based on perceptions that are by nature intangible and constantly in flux. The pattern of relations between the police and the community at various levels is intricate. The responsibility of the Home Office and Police Authorities is to ensure that there is an effective, efficient and acceptable police force which relates closely to the whole community. This ideal is based on the belief that successful policing depends upon the mutual respect and confidence between the police and the communities they serve. The complexities of the relationship with communities means there is no simple definition of what the police corporate image is. There is, however, much written and extensive research carried out over a number of years on the various images of the police and the attitudes of the community or public towards the organisation.

*Uglow (1988)* using the archetypal, romanticised, model police officer contrasted with a modern science fiction alien, illustrates the views of some contemporaries:

***"...DIXON has been replaced by DARTH VADER as the image of the***

***British Bobby...."***

***p. 19***

The view that there was ever a time when a friendly, approachable, comfortable and comforting '*Dixon*' (the avuncular police figure of cinema and television from 1954 to



1978) patrolled the streets is contradicted by *Olins (1988)*. Although he discovered there is widespread and fundamental support for the police, he also found:

*"...No evidence that there was ever a time when the police were  
universally loved and admired..."* *p. 5*

*Bowden (1978)* argues that the public stereotype the police and that they perceive the police through one or more of a number of collective images. While recognising a unique supportive relationship between public and police he also remarks that, '*few see them as paragons of virtue*', (p. 38).

These apparent contradictions are by no means a phenomenon of recent years, it has been so for several decades, but they do reflect the major problem of attempting to assess the corporate image of the police.

*Brogden (1982)* lists several means used to rate the popularity and image of the police:

- ▶ the rate of complaints against officers;
- ▶ the number of assaults against members of the force;
- ▶ the proportion of jury acquittals in the force; and
- ▶ the letters of appreciation received from members of the public.

All of these he describes as, '*contrived techniques for assessing public perception of the police (p. 18)* The idea that an assessment of how many complaints are received or how many officers are assaulted by members of the public is indeed a tenuous link measuring public perception and image of the service delivery.

c) *Police corporate image - the effect of media communication*

One of the component parts, and determinants, of corporate image identified in the model of corporate image formation, (Chapter Two, p. 20 ante), was that of media communication.

There is a pervasive myth, encouraged by the mass media and until recently by the police themselves, that the police spend the majority of their time investigating or responding to crime. This is not so. Some studies have shown that around 80% of all calls made to the police are not crime related at all. (The latest survey compiled by *Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary* in (1993) reveals that typically 18% of calls to the police are about crime and this only accounts for 30% of police time spent in responding to these calls.) The myth of 'crime-fighters' promulgated by the press and police has strong implications for the corporate image of the organisation as the police do not, for the majority of the time, perform this function. There can be few such high profile public service organisations whose general public or customers do not know their core function.

Historically, crime has been shown to be constantly rising - despite the fact that the statistics are virtually worthless as a measure of crime. For example, all the following distort the current statistical information available:

- ▶ what proportion of crime is reported? (this is unknown)
- ▶ what are the reporting/recording procedures? (these frequently change)
- ▶ have the reporting/recording procedures changed? (this happens frequently)
- ▶ has there been a change in the law? (new 'crimes' are created or others 'decriminalised')
- ▶ is the specific crime a current target for police activity? (increases crime numbers in specific areas).

*"....Not only are they (crime statistics) imprecise and functionally irrelevant but, in the hands of manipulative vested interest groups, they become dangerous. These meaningless figures have been used by police, politicians, academics and the media to serve their own interests...."*

*Will I. (1995) p. 19*

There is little doubt that images or perceptions of rising crime may come in a large part from the media and the police organisation - not from the personal experience of the member of the public. The latest survey in Durham Constabulary, *Gorton Services*

(1992) supports this contention as it indicates that less than a quarter of the population have a direct contact with the service during a single year.

The *Sunday Times* (1988) while questioning the use of hyperbole that surrounds the 'crime wave' and fond recollection of '*the good old days*' does, however, ask if there is a conspiracy between the police and politicians to win votes and resources, '*by terrifying society with tales of its misdeeds*'.

Another national newspaper, the *Daily Express* (1988), inferred a direct correlation between '*harrowing stories of murder, street mayhem and mindless violence*' with the fact that offenders were 'never' brought to justice to the, '*distrust or simple plain hostility towards the police*'.

This was followed by an editorial in January 1989. This stated that '*police efficiency has declined in recent years - the clear up rate of offences fell from 37% to 33%*'. Yet a further article appeared in February 1989 questioning an application by West Midlands Police for extra officers '*despite the fact that the overall crime rate has decreased*'. So the myth is propagated - police efficiency is judged against the detection rate for crime and a statement indicating there is an anomaly to request more police officers when the crime rate has decreased. All of these reports emphasise the crime role for the police service - a role which is a minority one for each force.

The importance of this as far as corporate image is concerned is that, as noted by *Uehling (op. cit.)*, if key communications, such as the mass media, project any organisation as it used to be rather than it is, or if key constituencies of the organisation are projected inaccurately, then public perception will be quite different from corporate reality - and the difference creates a potentially dangerous '*perception gap*'.

Also, to return to *Boulding (op. cit.)*, he points out that it is not mere knowledge and information which direct human behaviour, but rather it is the images we have - not what is true but what we believe to be true. The truth is that the police organisation spend more time in a public service/social service role than in a crime fighting one. The general public, arguably the customers of the service, may believe otherwise.

The media created the public image of the police more powerfully than anything else and they may not be inclined to present friendly 'village bobby' material even when it happens. Nevertheless, consistently over the last twenty years, opinion polls have shown that the police have a high level of support within a multitude of perceived images, *opinion polls: Harris (1969)-(1971), Gallup (1977), Marplan (1977), M.O.R.I. (1980), Gallup (1985)*.

Furthermore, in a comprehensive B.B.C. survey into attitudes toward the police, using a nationally representative sample of 5,690 adults aged 16 years and over, it was found that generally speaking:

*"....people are satisfied with the treatment they received from the police (78%) and the police are considered approachable (73%)...."*

*You and Yours B.B.C. (1987) p. 6*

Other factors than media communication do, of course, affect police corporate image.

*d) Police Corporate Image - the effect of environmental influences*

Environmental influences were also identified in the model of corporate image formation (Chapter Two, p. 20 ante) as one of the critical elements of corporate image formation. These influences, in the context of police corporate image, are perhaps stronger than on many other organisations.

For example, Government public order and economic policies towards industrial disputes: such as the National Union of Mineworkers in 1984; the print workers in 1986; and the prison officers in 1989. The police in these examples were portrayed in the media as an *'arm of the state'* in conflict with the working population.

Also, legislation such as the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 with enhanced powers of arrest, stop/search and road checks has aroused public controversy which can affect police image. Parliament mirrors the national dichotomy about police powers afforded by such legislation. Within parliamentary debates a sharp difference is apparent between those, such as Roy Hattersley M.P., who hold that *'the idea of imprisoning*

*innocent men and women so that they may provide information for the police is a power which is inconsistent with the operation of a free society', (Hansard 24.10.83), and those, like Ken Magginis M.P. who believe that:*

*"... Those who advocate that powers to arrest and detain for a period up to seven days should be set aside because that may lead to an erosion of liberty should know that there are times when good intelligence - sure intelligence - and admissible evidence are not the same thing. It is the duty of the police to act on good intelligence in an effort to obtain, by questioning, admissible evidence....."*

*Hansard (24. 10. 83)*

While there is an obvious need to balance civil liberties against the need to prevent crime there is an equally obvious potential for conflict and influence on police corporate image if, for whatever reason, there is public discourse about allegations that police officers too rigorously enforced contentious legislation.

Additionally, vocal pressure groups such as the Policy Studies Institute, Liberty (formally N.C.C.L.), London Strategic Policy Unit, and the Gay London Police Monitoring Unit, can all contribute to the nature of police corporate image. The effect, for example, of the following type of reporting - contained in a widely circulated briefing paper, can only be surmised:

*"....The militarisation of the Police has not only threatened fundamental rights to civil and political freedom, it has also led to many people being imprisoned for trade union activity or, as in the case of Kevin Gately, Blair Peach and Cynthia Jarrett, actually dying as the result of an over eager, and heavily armed police force...."*

*London Strategic Policy Unit (1988) p. 9*

The extensive public coverage by such pressure groups of some miscarriages of justice has meant that some cases have remained in the public spotlight for over twenty years. For example the 'Birmingham Six' and the 'Guildford Four', (cases when it was alleged that inaccuracies and inconsistencies in recording and interrogation of suspects was tantamount to police corruption), actually occurred twenty two years ago.

Even given accounts of police violence, corruption, law breaking and strike breaking, there is still some indication of the resilience of police corporate image, opinion polls *Harris, M.O.R.I., Gallup, ( op cit.)*

*e) Corporate Image - a role within the police service?*

The public has what at best *Kelvin (1971)* has described as an image of an 'ideal' police. Kelvin, in his market research report commissioned by the Home Office, notes that the image of the police and the attitudes towards it are ambivalent, '*a contradictory mixture of feelings of appreciation and threat*', (p. 4).



The police service itself and the public seem to differentiate between two functions of the organisation - a protective, social service and a crime fighting force. While *Kelvin* further states that the police as an organisation undervalues the branch that has most to do with the general public, he asserts that there should be no dichotomy between helpfulness or service to the community on the one hand, and the fight against crime and crime prevention on the other.

In a report commissioned by the Metropolitan Police on their corporate identity, 'A Force for Change', *Olins (1988) op. cit.*, highlights the uncertainty within the service itself of the police role, '*...this uncertainty manifests itself in a wide divergence on what is proper police work....*', (p. 8).

It was stated earlier, (Chapter Two, p. 27 ante) that if members of any organisation hold widely divergent concepts of what they are supposed to be or do, as is apparently the case with the police, this culture influences behaviour and is another determinant of their corporate image.

Before addressing questions of police culture it is salient to note that the police service itself has recognised the need to improve its corporate image. The commissioning of the corporate identity report on the Metropolitan Police, *Olins (1988) op. cit.*, is one such evidence of this. The rationale for improving police corporate image further evidences the inter-disciplinary nature of the concept.

For example, in marketing, as *Kotler (1975)* has pointed out, the basic reason a non-profit making organisation should be interested in marketing tools such as corporate image, is that it will enable the organisation to be more effective in achieving its objectives. He also states that organisations, '*....depend upon voluntary exchanges to accomplish their objectives....*' (p. 38), and improved corporate image would assist such voluntary exchanges. The police service in Great Britain relies on voluntary exchanges with the general public and it has policed traditionally with consent of the public.

Corporate image has also been termed a public relations tool, *Dickson (1984) op. cit.* Improved public relations in terms of organisations interacting more effectively with those outside the organisation has been a recent goal, locally and nationally, with the police service. However, the current use of some public relations strategies by the police service, for example, the formation of professional press and public relations departments, has been seen by *Uglow (1988)* as:

*"....an invasion....an attempt to modify the police news in order to construct a more positive image...."* p. 19

As noted in the introductory chapter, one of the catalysts to this research and subsequent thesis was the role of the author as a press officer within the police service. The views of *Fortier (1972)* in describing the police characteristic of a tendency to be defensive as a '*hypersensitivity to criticism*' and of *Lamb (1980)* in describing the service as '*inordinately sensitive to criticism*' were additionally personally experienced by the

author in the role of press and public relations officer for Durham Constabulary.

Furthermore, as *Bernstein (1985)* has reported, '*anonymity is no refuge*' and there is ample evidence that silence in the face of controversy implies guilt with continued silence moving growing numbers of the public to a stronger conviction of that guilt. Although the police command considerable media and public interest, the police service in general has a reactive rather than proactive approach to marketing and public relations opportunities. Despite the intense interest that police work generates, the public is still vague about the specific activities of the service and the methods of work. This is evidenced in the author's own experience at Police Consultative group meetings set up nationally within each police area as a statutory consultation process between the police and local communities.

Also, more than ever before, the public is questioning the role and competence of the police with varying degrees of bewilderment, despair or cynicism. As one public relations manager has argued:

*"....merely being tight-lipped and adopting a low profile, while you hope your problems will go away, will not create confidence or credibility...."*

*Morgan Rees (1984) p. 13*

Recent years have seen the adoption of a more open policy of dealing with the media nationally and locally, as in the example cited of the formation of press and public

relations offices throughout the country. While this has met with some success particularly in promotional work, there remains a culture in the organisation itself, which the author experienced as a press officer, which the author would describe as insular, isolationist and secretive. Yet most of the work carried out by the police service is neither secret nor confidential and there is a need to pursue an even more open communication marketing policy. Open communication means that questions from the public and the media are not only tolerated but encouraged - even when they may be unsettling.

However, there is a well-known maxim that there is a big difference between improving ones looks by cosmetics and improving them by better health, and perhaps the need for an improved police corporate image through better communication must be allied to change in police corporate culture:

*"....in the same way that publicity will not sell a bad product, public relations exercises will not disguise a bad police force. There is no point in presenting, through public relations exercises, an image of helpful, willing courteous police officers, if whenever the public meets a member of the force he or she is anything but helpful, willing, and courteous...."*

*Bunyard (1977) p. 135*

There is no evidence to suggest that the corporate image of Durham Constabulary is in anyway different to the national picture and public surveys in recent years by Gorton

Services, *Gorton Services (1991/1992) op. cit.*, have proved this to be the case. The same can be postulated about the culture of Durham Constabulary and it is to the subject of culture that the next section of the chapter refers.

*f) Police Corporate Culture - the context*

The perspective taken on police culture by *Bowden (1978)* is that the central core of the police working culture is that they stereotype the public they serve. He states further that the public's perception of the police in its turn, '*...has an impact on their self image and working personality....*', p. (32).

*Uglow (1988) op. cit.*, goes further and argues that police culture reinforces a status and power beyond that needed for an emergency public service and, '*...that often they (the police) do not regard themselves as a public service at all....*', p. (56).

Many writers have suggested the existence of a 'police personality' or rather they have claimed certain personality traits thought to be typical of police officers which impacts upon their corporate culture. Two much quoted authors on these traits are *Lefkowitz (1971) and Balch (1972)*. *Lefkowitz* defines the traits as:

*"....authoritarianism, suspiciousness, physical courage, cynicism, conservatism, loyalty, secretiveness and self assertiveness...."* p. 15

*Balch* in a similar vein characterises them as:

*"....suspiciousness, conventionality, cynicism, prejudice and distrust of  
the unusual...."* *p. 206*

*Vastola (1978)* questions the widespread belief in a common police personality and states such findings are supported by less than convincing empirical evidence. *McKew (1982)* in a review of literature on police personality agrees that the research evidence is not conclusive much being based on reflective subjective opinions but does conclude, if only tentatively, '*....the existence of a distinct, modal police personality....*', p. (13).

Even given as a very broad generalisation that the other literature supports the view that police officers have certain personality traits, for example, *Hall (1979)*; *Colman and Gorman (1982)*, another contentious view would be that only those individuals with similar personalities are recruited to the organisation.

However, at an empirical level, other research both in England, *Cochrane and Butler (1980)*; *Butler (1982)*, and in the U.S.A. *Bayley and Mendelsohn (1968)*; *Bent (1974)*, suggests that the typical police officer is no more authoritarian in outlook than the average citizen. Perhaps a further pertinent question would be, are 'police personalities' moulded by the organisation? (This question will be addressed later in this Chapter.)

The police are symbolised externally as a paramilitary bureaucracy and it is correct that for various reasons that police forces have been organised on an authoritarian, quasi-military basis. There is however what **Keller (1978)** has described as an '*important paradox*' for the individual police officer as part of an administration based on a military model of a series of ranks.

The paradox arises because the military model is designed so that people within the system can efficiently receive and respond to orders issued by superiors - this is not so for police officers. For example, soldiers, especially in the lower ranks, are not expected to make complicated decisions - only to respond to orders. Police officers, that is constables in the lowest rank of the service, are constantly expected to make decisions quickly and solve complicated problems before a senior officer can offer guidance or lend assistance. Keller further argues that no amount of training can be effective without organisational norms which reinforce the importance of independent, competent decision making skills of the police officer.

In an examination of some elements of the personality of police officers and their implications, **Butler and Cochrane (1977)** found that a police recruit soon realises that the law is a rather crude and gross guide to his or her actions, and they have to take into account a multitude of factors before deciding to enforce the law or deal with the incident in another manner. Therefore, in the absence of official guidance and direction:

*"...he is left to set his own standards of discretion being guided by the informal codes which exist within his immediate work group and the occasional 'hints' he may perceive as emanating from the policy makers...."*

*p. 445*

Policing is a highly discretionary activity and it is the variation, randomness even uncertainty of where the strict enforcement of law and internal rules is required, which lends influence to police corporate culture.

**g) *Police corporate culture - three studies***

The following three longitudinal studies provide insight into the social organisation and corporate culture of the police and the effect of culture on effectiveness.

***Reuss-Ianni (1983)*** found that there was what she termed two distinct cultures of policing a, '*...street cop culture and a management cop culture....*', *p. (87)*, both characterised by competing and conflicting perspectives on procedure and practice. This work contradicts the view that there is a monolithic single 'cop' culture that pervades all levels of the organisation. It stresses that the rank and file street officer is guided in his or her day to day performance and behaviour by a culture which clamours for a return to the good old days, which is working class in origin and temperament, and which regards community relations as 'Mickey Mouse bullshit'.



In contrast, there is a competing ethos at management level which seeks to maximise the bureaucratic benefits of efficient organisation, rational decision making, cost effective procedures and objective accountability at all levels of policing.

One of the major implications of this, *Reuss-Ianni* states, is that because much policy and decision making at an administrative level is:

*"...perceived at street level as arbitrary and unrelated to local needs and conditions..."* *p. 92*

Furthermore, officers who are not part of the planning and feel no stake in the success of any plan, will not exert much effort towards the realisation of the higher, corporate levels of goals and objectives.

Such arguments are not of course unique to policing, but support two common findings in organisational research, *Davis (1968)*; *Brenner and Sigband (1973)*; *Level and Johnson (1978)*. One is that where there is a persistent problem of dilution, distortion and corruption of policy directives as they move from organisations' headquarters to 'the worker in the field', and secondly that an individual's first loyalty is to his or her immediate organisational unit - the degree to which they see the unit as representing the total organisation, is the most important factor in his or her acceptance of policy and decision making by the leadership.

*Fielding (1988)* supports the view that police corporate culture degrades the ability of senior officers to manage, and subverts attempts to extract greater accountability of constables for their actions and views the culture as a:

*"....moulding of attitudes - with numbing regularity - of virtually all who enter...."* *p. 38*

In following a group of recruits from application to join, through probation, to three years service, Fielding noted a significant change in the officers. Initially they regarded the occupation, or think that the organisation wishes to be regarded, as one oriented more to social service than to crime control. This perspective is devalued by police corporate culture until:

*"....the constables sustain an imagery of policing which puts value on an element of the work, crime control, which they can seldom perform...."* *p. 42*

Again he noted that policy was often neither clearly expressed nor understood; that there was a general inability to plan or identify problems effectively because of a lack of communication (feedback), from street level and that the system of placing a recruit with an older 'tutor constable', served to replicate the corporate culture of a crime fighting orientation.

The most recent study by *McConville and Shepherd (1992)* looked at '*the sociological meaning behind police images*', with particular reference to community policing and neighbourhood watch schemes. They found police corporate culture to be:

*"....essentially aggressive and action centred and stands opposite to the ideals of the community beat work....For officers at the sharp end of policing, community beat work is a sop to liberal society which, if it is to be undertaken at all, is a minority pursuit of misfits, or officers approaching retirement. Core policing for them is confrontational and impositional in nature and directed against those considered to be outcasts or on the margins of society...."* p. 117

**h) *Police Corporate culture - the effect of police function and role***

Although the police officers role is incredibly diffuse, traditionally the police themselves have given little formal emphasis to their 'service' role. There is general agreement in much of the research into the organisation that the corporate culture of police officers themselves evades or fudges the issue of providing a public service. *Manning (1977)* contends the police organisation judges itself and its members against its; '*ill defined goal of crime control effectiveness*', when they spend most of their time doing - *and doing badly because they do not consider it 'real' police work*', p. (206), - is supplying other public services.

It was found by *Reiner (1978)* that only one in twenty officers saw their work chiefly in terms of social service rather than crime fighting. *Jones (1980)* also asserts that the public chiefly evaluate police according to their performance as helpers or comforters, while police evaluate themselves against technical proficiency in crime fighting.

One of the reasons for this crime oriented corporate culture suggested by *Brogden (1982)* is that crime is clear cut:

*"...the problem crystallised, the moral distinction between right and wrong easily made, definitive action possible and the results statistically measurable...."*

*p. 172*

while other service actions are rarely other than confused on all dimensions and have few immediate clues to resolution.

This view is shared by *Uglow (1988) op. cit.*, who claims the police as an institution use crime statistics to press for more resources despite the fact that these statistics reflect what the police choose to record and the public have chosen to report.

There are of course differences in police corporate culture, for example, what may be true of police in London, need not be true of police in Greater Manchester, and what holds true for police in a metropolitan force like Northumbria may not hold true for a rural force such as North Yorkshire. Indeed the culture can be different from one area to

the next in the same force but the predominant culture throughout the organisation appears to remain that which emphasises crime control and law enforcement as the prime objectives of work.

This manifests itself in a number of ways listed by *Jones (1980)* as organisational processes:

*"...created and maintained as a diversion away from prevention, social welfare work and order maintenance to the legalistic crime control law enforcement aspects...."* *p. 106*

Examples are:

- ▶ a socialisation process which stresses the importance of law enforcement by judging the suitability of recruits in the first two years of service by production of enforcement statistics. For example, number of arrests or reports made.
- ▶ the maintenance of the perception that the only way to advance is by promotion or specialisation achieved by providing evidence of 'success' in enforcement statistical terms
- ▶ pressures upon the organisation to demonstrate efficiency has led to the use of performance measures with an obvious bias towards those which are statistically measurable i.e. crime/law enforcement

- ▶ like other bureaucratic organisations, the police rely heavily on paper. As the many aspects of police work which could be defined as social work or service are rarely recorded on paper, whereas most aspects of law enforcement are committed to paper, the effect is to emphasise the importance of law enforcement.
- ▶ the staff appraisal scheme and commendation reward system is inextricably bound up with the shared norms and implicit assumptions of the organisation. To maintain a high profile it is perceived that only crime related successes will be recognised by the hierarchy.

In most large organisations the lowest ranking members perform the more routine tasks, and the tasks, together with the means of accomplishing them, are decided by superiors. However, in the police service, the lowest ranking officer is almost solely responsible for enforcing or otherwise, those laws which are the least precise and most ambiguous.

This has the effect of strengthening the influence of the corporate culture of the organisation which acts as a guide to the use of discretion by the police officer. Even though consent to policing rests, in part, on providing a public service function, undoubtedly previous literature has revealed a predominant view of police officers that more time should be spent on crime related work. The corporate culture obviously has implications for the corporate image the police service projects.

In common with employees of other organisations, police officers need to know what business they are in, where the organisation stands at the moment, where it is going, how it will get there, and what is in it for them.

The size, structure and traditions of the police organisation may inhibit or maybe a barrier to effective internal communication. If the corporate image the police organisation wishes to project is one which emphasises its service role, there is a possible barrier to the projection of that image in that the corporate culture of the 'salesforce' - the operational officers eschew this role.

*i) Police Corporate Culture - the effect of organisational size*

On the basis of any criterion, each individual police force and the police organisation in general, is a large operation, (over 200,000 employees nationally with the smallest 'local' force of approximately 1000 employees). There are consistent findings in organisational research, *Bass (1960); O'Reilly and Roberts (1977)*, that group size has a significant effect on the nature of the interaction between group members and that the larger the organisation, the greater is the constraint on communication between senior management and employees.

Added to this the police organisation is a reflection of its quasi-military origin and is rigidly hierarchical, there being a marked lack of formal and informal consultation between highest and lowest ranks. This appears to have the effect of reinforcing the

corporate culture of the patrol officer - the crime orientation - leading one writer to comment:

*"....the inability to communicate long term goals to the ranks tends to produce a law enforcement style of policing ...." Fielding (1989) p. 270*

Certainly there appears to be a need to show that the police are accountable to the community they serve and do not choose their priorities as an instinctive response to crime. Whether or not this can be successfully transmitted to the workforce is a matter of conjecture. As has previously been described, there is also a need to improve the external communications of the organisation.

**j) *Police Corporate Culture - the effect of the working environment***

Furthermore, there is an overwhelming consistency of view from marketing academics and practitioners, that the public use the physical appearance of an organisation as a source of data about what that business and the people in it are like. Employees too are influenced by their working environment.

Not only is the physical appearance of the organisation crucially important because it is perceived by the public as a measure of management competence, but it also has a strong influence on the behaviour of those working within the organisation. It was identified by *Olins (1988)* that in the Metropolitan Police area many police stations were run down,



public areas neglected and an '*atmosphere of shabby confusion*' prevailed. It was also found that the uniforms, equipment, signs, colours, symbols and typography were, for the most part, '*confusing and incoherent*'.

This is certainly not an isolated example of one police organisation - similar conditions and impressions can be found in most forces. Indeed in a project by *British Gas Northern (1990)*, managers from Durham University Business School found that some Durham Constabulary buildings were '*sad and neglected*'. The physical appearance will undoubtedly effect the corporate image of the service but a further question will explore whether this impacts or influences the corporate culture of the employees or is part of that culture and may therefore reinforce the corporate image.

***k) Summary of police context: what policing is all about - catching criminals?***

The concept of corporate image has rarely been applied to the police service. There have, however, been many studies of police culture. The aim of this thesis is to link up the discrete elements of corporate image and culture and in the exploration of the relationship between the two apply them to Durham Constabulary and the police service. The extent to which the relationship or link outlined exists is still to be determined.

Looking at a part of the police organisation in this context is probably unique. There cannot be many organisations who are constantly in hostile confrontational situations with the publics or customers they serve - and indeed on occasions arrest them! (Using

the Oxford English dictionary definition of the word customer '*a person with whom one has to deal*'). Over the years the public has come to expect many services from the police organisation which have nothing to do with law enforcement. If the police are to be servants of the public and provide a much broader service than mere law enforcement then this ethic must be recognised by the operational officer. Currently there appear to be cultural characteristics, as described previously, which are both a barrier to this recognition and influence the overall corporate image projected.

It is not only the police themselves which make the organisation unique. It is a service organisation. A twenty four hour emergency and social service provided to the general public. Unfortunately the 'customers of the organisation' - the general public - have not defined what the service is that they demand or expect. As *Waddington (1993)* observes:

*"...First it is necessary to abandon analogies with other types of organisation. Policing is not only demand led, it is demand determined, as what the police do is largely what they are asked to do by the public..."*

*p. 22*

Policing is not just, however, another name for social work. The broad constellation of problems associated with current society defies simple solutions. Critics of a community style of policing, both within and outside the service, think that involving police officers in efforts that have not traditionally been viewed as part of the police mandate is

wasteful. Traditionalists insist that the police are fully committed trying to battle against serious crime, so efforts that detract from that effort not only waste valuable police time and money, but they can erode the credibility and authority of the police. The attitude appears to be that social work should be left to social workers so that the police can focus all their energies on their real and important job of fighting crime. In the experience of the author and in this review it appears that many police officers hold this view. Yet this ignores the fact that police are already in many and various community activities. An example of the variety of tasks demanded or expected was recorded in the Police Sub-Divisional incident log for the area in which the author recently had command (July 1993):

*CALLER: "...Suspicious man in the church yard. Has placed a roast chicken at the feet of a religious statue..."*

*SEQUEL: "...Police attended. All in order. Chicken consumed by caretaker's dog..." (!)*

*Incident reference BE3/19952/93*

The question is not whether the police should become involved in efforts that do not directly focus on serious crime but on what kinds of other services they should provide. To examine anything within an organisation whose role and function is not clearly determined is unusual. To attempt to analyse the corporate image of the same organisation must make the context unique.

This research was not an exercise, however, in developing a public relations or marketing strategy or indeed image promotion strategy for Durham Constabulary. In any case some aspects of public relations and image promotion have come to be seen by the public as manipulative, deceptive and even dishonest. If improving the corporate image of the police service was seen as a one way propaganda apparatus, it would not only be shunned by the public, but by the service itself.

*"....it cannot present a false case, or an illusory one - the illusion will evaporate.*

*Dickson (1984) p. 5*

As previously stated this research and subsequent thesis is concerned with exploring the relationship between the culture of Durham Constabulary to the image projected by the organisation and to evaluate whether corporate image has a functional relevance to the service.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## Durham Constabulary: findings from design and cultural perspectives

### a) *Introduction*

In Chapter Two, (p. 20 ante), a model of the components and influences of corporate image was given to illustrate the identified components of the concept; to emphasise the inherent multidimensional and interdisciplinary nature of the subject; and to provide a framework from which the research has evolved. There is no single factor that determines an organisation's corporate image and very few components of the image are absolute or discrete. However, as discussed in previous chapters, a number of authors, notably *Kennedy (1977)*, *Dowling (1986)*, *Barich and Kotler (1991)* and *Worcester (1972)* have indicated some factors or components that have a strong influence on corporate image; or in Worcester's words are, 'crucial image influences'.

This chapter will examine the components and influences on Durham Constabulary corporate image illustrated in the model of the corporate image formation process referred to above.

The findings of the research in this chapter is evidenced both from the work of others, (for example local policing surveys and research), and from the research involving the

focus groups. This is necessary to be consistent with the holistic approach adopted during this research and subsequent thesis. It will be made clear throughout this chapter which is the contribution of the work of others, and that which involves the focus groups which were central to this research.

**b) *Durham Constabulary 'public image' influences***

As previously defined, (Chapter Two p. 21), 'public image' is the image held by the publics or groups with no direct experience of the organisation - who may share a 'what everybody knows' stereotype of the organisation. It is usually a broad generalised image rather than a sharp detailed picture.

Durham Constabulary, in following the recommendations of the Audit Commission, carried out its first public attitudinal survey in 1991. Whilst some concerns were expressed regarding sampling, a total of 1425 street interviews were carried out with residents of County Durham. This street survey indicated, in general, that there was a 59 - 67% level of satisfaction with the service provided by the Constabulary. However, within this level of satisfaction, 60% of the sample had had no direct contact with the police. This survey can now be compared and contrasted with the completed 1992 results.

The second survey consisted of 1400 face to face street interviews. These were carried out by independent researchers, at various locations within the Force area, during March 1992. On this occasion the interviews were according to a pre - designed sampling

frame, designed to mirror the age/sex demographic structure of County Durham. The sample also accurately reflected the population of the Force area in general in terms of socio-economic breakdown of respondents.

One of the main findings was that:

*"...67.4% of the respondents stated that to some degree they were satisfied with the service provide by Durham Constabulary. This compares favourably with the satisfaction level from the 1991 survey (62.3%). Levels of dissatisfaction have also slightly fallen by 0.4% to 12.8%..."*

*Gorton Services (1992) p. 8*

Again it should be noted that 61% of the total in this random, representative sample had not been in contact with the police.

In the summary of the attitudes to the police in County Durham, *Gorton Services (1992) op. cit.*, state that personal contact between officers and the public is normally the largest single factor in determining respondents feelings towards the police. They conclude:

*"...Where respondents who had contact and those who had no contact were measured, it is likely that persons having no contact with the police may well have given a more positive answer to the ratings for Durham Constabulary... The more contact the public have with the police, then the less positive they will rate the force..."*

*p. 10*

While the focus groups research was limited in terms of this specific component of corporate image, as obviously only internal perceptions could be elicited by this methodology, two groups did consist of Special Constabulary personnel - those members of the public who voluntarily, part time, assist the regular police service.

The findings from the Special Constabulary groups indicated some support for the local surveys previously reported in this chapter. For example, respondents revealed that before they had direct contact with the police service they held stereotypical views of it:

*"....I really saw the police as a well organised, efficient group perhaps because I'd been fed on T.V detective fiction...."*

*"....My imagery of the police was one of the last bastions of the law - impartial, a throw back to solid values and morals - even though there were some high profile media allegations of scandal and corruption it was if that wasn't part of a service I knew - I still maintained my idealistic image...."*

However, the respondents were critical of the service having had the opportunity to experience it through personal contact:



*"...I soon became disillusioned, even depressed. The police are like any other large organisation in my experience - very inefficient - struggling to cope - yet I had held them up as being special..."*

*"...The service delivery, once you've actually experienced working with the officers, isn't actually that efficient. If it's a serious matter the response and the service is good - but the routine day to day work isn't valued and the service suffers from a type of organisational lethargy. I think a few officers need to realise the job isn't about excitement but it's dealing with minor complaints and the like..."*

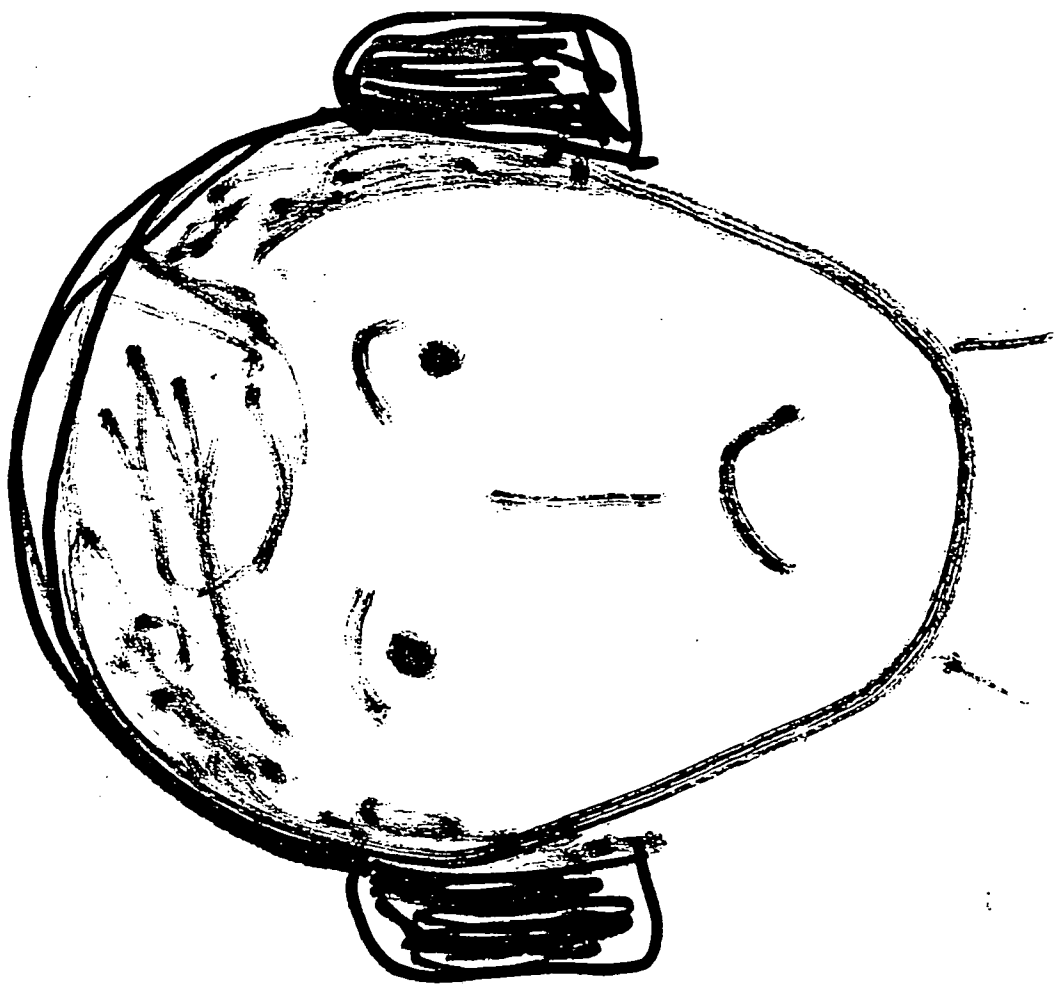
These views were evidenced in some illustrations drawn by respondents from the focus groups, for example:



OBSTRUCTIVE

OBSTRUCTIVE

Busy



999

999

999

The group interpreted the drawings in the following way: (for predictive technique methodology see Chapter 5, pp. 122-125 ante)

*"....I think it shows that Steve is disillusioned. He probably thought the force were wonderful but maybe the reality is different...."*

*"....Its obvious that we have certain images of the police but when you get to know the organisation its a bit of a let down. There's inefficiency, cynicism and they don't pull together like a team...."*

When asked to comment on the interpretations and to clarify the 'artists' intention the respondents revealed their thoughts behind the images they had drawn. For example:

*"....generally the comments are about right although I didn't really mean the picture to appear so harsh about what I felt about my organisation. I will have to think whether my feelings that I've portrayed are really are so negative...."*

*"....I knew how mine might be viewed. Yes I probably am disappointed to say the least by the service - I don't know though whether this affects the way I work with officers...."*

In general discussion, after the display of the drawings, further evidence emerged of the negative views held by Special Constabulary officers of the police service:

*"...I was shocked to find, albeit a minority, of officers who were lazy and incompetent. The organisation seems to carry these individuals. Nobody, including the Sergeants, Inspectors and other bosses challenges these people - the Sergeants and Inspectors even joke with P.C.'s about the incompetents - everyone knows who they are but do nothing about it..."*

*"...If the public knew as much as we do now about how the service is just a piecemeal, cobbled together, reactionary organisation they would be shocked. What the public are fed on are things like crimewatch where a glossy picture is painted of police efficiency when the reality isn't even a matt (paint) finish..."*

As stated these comments are consistent with the findings of the local surveys previously cited. The fact that direct contact with the service leads to a more negative image of it, relates specifically to the corporate culture of the organisation and this will be more specifically examined in later in this chapter and analysed in Chapter Eight.

*c) Summary of findings on public image influences*

The research has shown that within Durham Constabulary, the stereotype image of the police service is more positive than an evaluated image or an image gained through the use of service. This would suggest that it makes it questionable as to whether marketing the service, or embarking upon a change of identity with a view to improving its corporate image will create any improvement in the service delivered. The stereotype public image of the service does, however, remain very positive.

It appears that the maxim of increased familiarity equating with increased favourability, (Chapter Three p. 55 ante), does not apply in the case of Durham Constabulary - if the familiarity is gained through direct contact with the service - even for those closely associated with it such as the Special Constabulary.

The implications of these findings will be analysed in the next chapter.

*d) Environmental influences*

These were defined in Chapter Two, (p. 21 ante), as including legislation, government policies, the prevailing economy, pressure groups and competitor's actions. On occasions these have been referred to by other authors as 'extraneous influences', but it will be argued, in the case of the police, they are of critical importance in terms of impacting upon overall corporate image:

*"....No company can operate in isolation, however, regardless of the wider environment in which it finds itself. In particular the policies of the company will be influenced by government legislation, the economic condition of the country and of the region in which the company is situated, by the activities of competitors, and by the prevailing cultural patterns of the country. It is elements of the environment such as these which will make the policies more or less acceptable. Yet these policies are all important since they form the basis of the company image...."*

*Kennedy (1977) p. 41*

On the face of it, nationally and in County Durham, policing today has little in common with policing over the last century. And yet, some of the essential features of modern policing are the produce of many decades of historical development and appear unchanged. The continuing importance of the status and office of constable, the autonomy of Chief Officers, the existence of local police forces and the balance between central and local control of policing, are features that have long existed. However, modern police forces have evolved from institutions created from centuries ago to serve different purposes and totally different communities. (The historical influences on policing policy and corporate image of the police will be discussed in the conclusions in Chapter Nine.)

An examination of the environmental influences on the police service will illustrate those which have the greatest impact on their corporate image. Specifically;

- ▶ legislation,
- ▶ community policing,
- ▶ public order, and
- ▶ pressure group

influences will be examined.

- ▶ *legislation*

*"....English law consists of a mass of separate and widely differing statutory provisions punctuated by serious gaps... and supplemented by confusing judicial decisions...which raise more problems than they solve...."*

*Polvious (1983) p. 132*

As an enforcement agency many legislative changes affect most aspects of policing and, therefore, the manner in which that policing is perceived. For example, in the last decade major legislative change has included the Criminal Attempts Act 1981, the Mental Health Act 1983, the Data Protection Act 1984, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, the Public Order Act 1986, numerous redraftings of road traffic legislation, and most recently the Criminal Justice Act 1994.

Of these, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and the Codes of Practice that were implemented on January 1st 1986, are considered to be the most far reaching reform of the century. It introduced radical legal reforms in the powers and duties of the

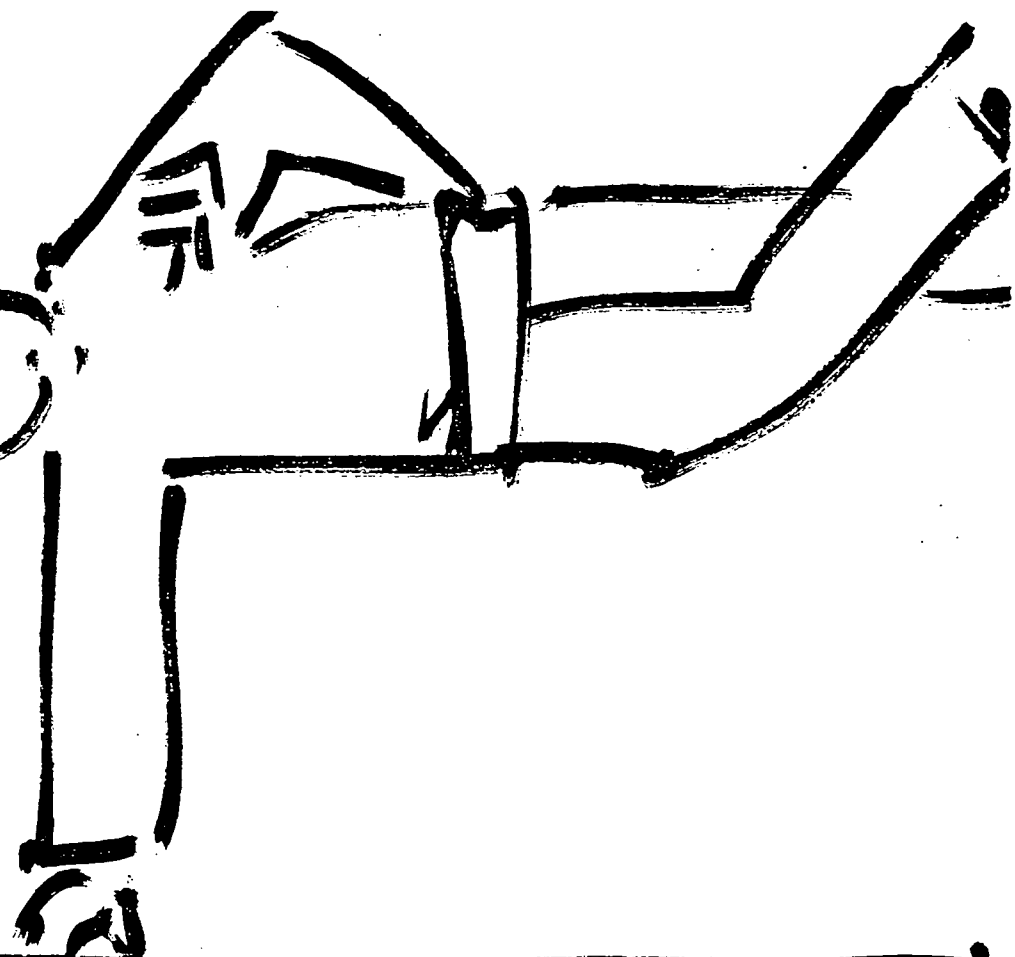


police, regulating the whole of the investigation process. The Act followed a comprehensive review of all police powers, practices and procedures.

Many of the practices and procedures reviewed by the Act, for example, a right to free legal advice for all people detained, tape recording of interviews and keeping of custody records - a log of every occurrence during the detention of an individual - were viewed by focus group respondents as '*cumbersome and unnecessary*', or '*a further attempt to swing the balance in favour of the criminal*'.

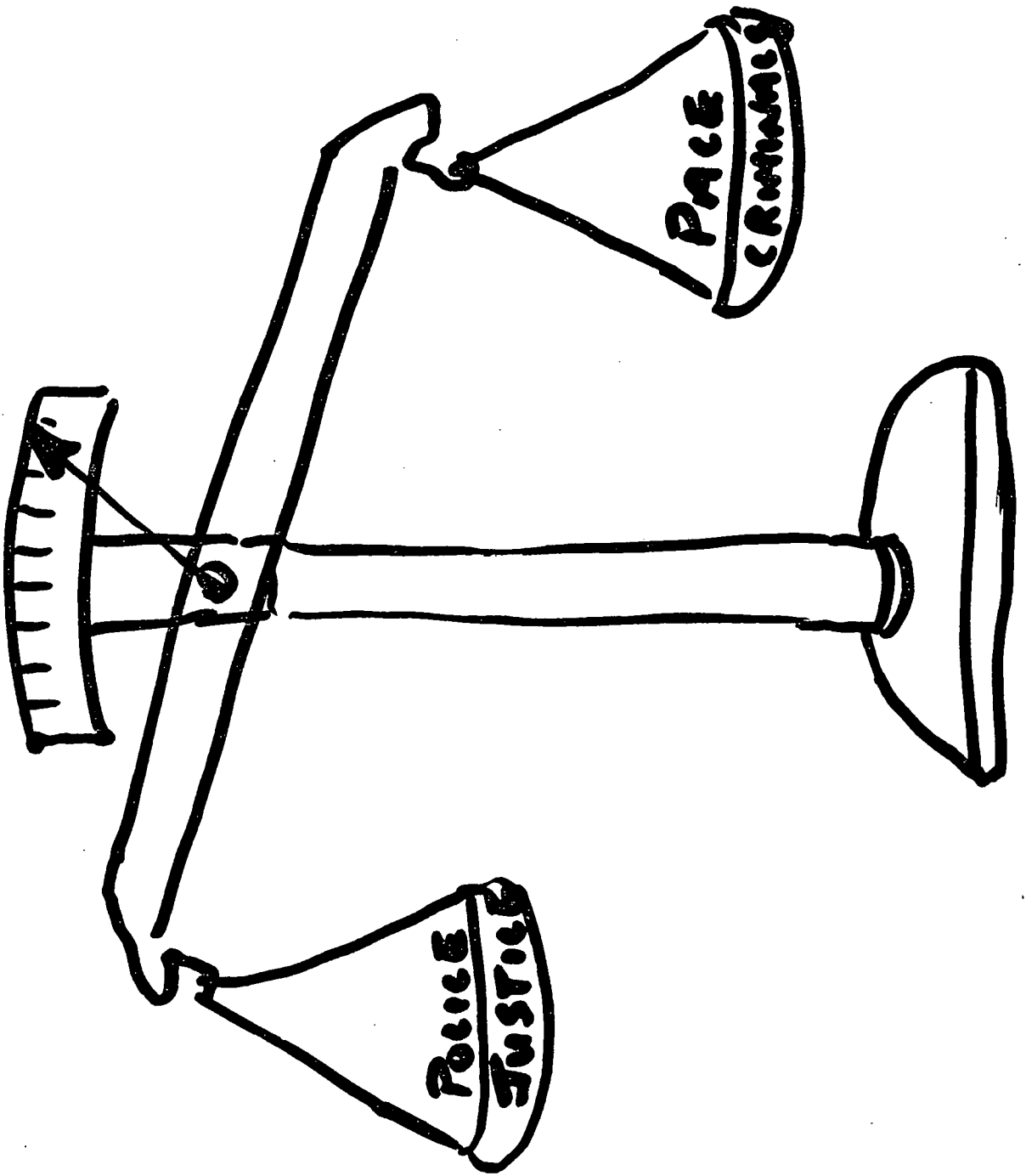
While there was an acknowledgement that some of the changes were worthwhile, to the extent that they could be used to eliminate some of the criticisms of the service, Durham Constabulary respondents expressed doubts about the overall value to justice and how the impact coloured the public's image of the police service. The main criticism of this legislation by respondents was that it was '*a limiting factor*' in that it was a constraint to the way policing could effectively be done. For example:

COSTARDY



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NONI  
NONI



In general discussion of these images it was further revealed how constrained officers feel by these environmental influences:

*"....Our hands are tied. The balance has shifted so far on the side of the criminal that its difficult to get a conviction. The problem is, I'm sure, that the public don't realise how hamstrung we are - and we get the blame for poor detection rates...."*

*"....The PACE Act is another stick to beat us with... I can't see how it can improve the way we police, indeed quite the contrary, I think its changed us even more to an overladen bureaucracy - tied up in offices doing the Acts paperwork when the public are constantly shouting for a more visible presence on the streets...."*

Further queries were raised by the respondents about who the Act was actually for:

*"....If this legislation was intended to 'protect' the general public in some way; its a farce. It may protect the criminal element but is that what society wants?..."*

The focus group findings do reveal two fundamental issues that influence the way the service is perceived by the general public. They are:

- ▶ who runs, controls or guides the police? In other words, whose police service is it? and
- ▶ what is its purpose? - which may conflict with a further question - what does it do?

These findings and the issues they raise in terms of corporate image will be reported in the next section of this chapter on another 'environmental' influence; community issues.

- ▶ *Community policing or policing the community?*

To answer the questions raised above is difficult and respondents in focus group interviews were unable to provide a consistency of views. For example:

*"....I think we are the only genuine public service - working with and for the community...."*

*"....I firmly believe that we instruments of central government. We may believe we provide a community service but how often do we address white collar crime or the corruption of officials in local and central government. We police those areas where petty, easily visible crime is prevalent - we create our own priorities but with strong direction...."*

The police service is involved in a complex relationship with central and local government and the general public. While the police organisation itself espouses ideals of

service to the community and meeting public expectations, the perception that the police are an arm of the government is undoubtedly held by many - including the respondents in the focus groups.

In the focus groups it is relevant to briefly mention here, although it is an area which will be revisited later in the chapter under cultural influences, the police view of the general public or community. It is captured in such descriptions on the respondents drawings as; "*fickle, apathetic, sensitive, untrusting, complaining, volatile and disorderly*". These descriptions reveal views and attitudes which impact upon or influence working practices and, furthermore, the image the organisation projects. This will be analysed in Chapter Eight.

*Morgan's (1987)* description of the composition and characteristic development of national statutory police community consultative committees and his analysis of their work suggests that, although they can be of value in ventilating local problems and promoting practical co-operative solutions, they have not had much success in building, in any serious way, the hoped for partnership between the police and the community.

The research in the focus groups revealed that officers view the statutory consultation process, set up by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, as little more than an unnecessary demand upon their time - with little perceived benefit:

*"...The (consultation) panels have nil effect and to my mind take up too much police time...."*

*"...The police liaison meeting is every two months but, to be frank, they are a waste of time. The moans you get are usually the same. I wouldn't say they had a major affect on the way we police the Sub-Division...."*

*"...Each meeting I've been to it has been going over complaints and questions from the previous one. They never appear to make any progress and the matters raised are usually trifling or minor ones anyway...."*

It is clear that community policing or policing the community issues are fundamental to the corporate image projected by the organisation and turn on the inevitable tensions and conflicts in the role of the police in a democratic society. Many of the police functions can be seen as adversarial and therefore can only be reconciled with difficulty with the creation of consensus. Moreover, the establishment of goodwill is also difficult because in any locality the police have to deal not with one community but with several, and almost inevitably impact on those communities in different ways. This, in turn, means the images projected are often inconsistent. This is also true in the case of policing public order situations which is the next environmental influence to be examined.

► *Policing public disorder and industrial disputes*

Nowhere are the environmental influences of legislation and government policies stronger on the corporate image of the police service than in the area of policing public disorder and industrial disputes.

Historically, there have been several distinct forms of disorder and industrial disputes. Correspondingly police control tactics have developed along the lines of distinction. For the purposes of this research only events, and images, of the relatively recent years will be reported from the focus group research findings.

In many police areas, including Durham Constabulary, there is well publicised policies of co-operation with the local communities. One suggestion why these policies should be undermined was revealed by this research, and will be further examined later regarding police corporate culture, however, it is also pertinent to briefly mention here, that officers' concern with the prevention and detection of crime, permits and even encourages beliefs about city and run down council house areas which are incompatible with a sympathetic co-operation with their communities:

*".... We provide the service that particular community (Council estate in market town area) deserves - nothing more. The vast majority regard us as almost alien and I treat them similarly. We get no respect at all...."*



*"....They're virtually all unemployed and criminals on the estate (council property in new town area) - we have to police them strongly to show that we're still in control...."*

These beliefs have the further affect that confrontations between the police and the residents in these areas are explained away by some members of the organisation as being due to powerful 'criminal' elements within the community rather than the effects of social deprivation or distrust of police behaviour. This creates a conflict of interest between the criminal side of police work and the maintenance of order and harmony in the community. Of course there are large individual differences in the various types of attitude revealed by the research, but the underlying consistency of views merits consideration as an influencer or change agent of behaviour and thus image.

A further environmental influence on police corporate image previously mentioned in this particular section, is industrial disputes. Several questions can be seen to be factors impacting upon image; for example - what role should police have in industrial disputes - and who decides on the role - and are the police seen as partisan or impartial?

One example of such a dispute which had a significant effect nationally and locally in County Durham, was the Miners' dispute of 1984. Even a decade later the effects on police image remain. Some commentators have viewed the dispute as a 'major watershed' in the development of the way in which the police operate which has left a 'depressing legacy'. While there is an appreciable volume of literature giving a detailed chronology of

the events and issues involved in the dispute, only those matters pertaining to the changed perception and image of the police service will be mentioned here.

There is very little agreement between the participants in the dispute - the Government, the National Coal Board, the police, the miners and their unions, and to some extent the general public - about its purpose, its conduct and its legacies.

Another finding from the focus group interviews about the dispute is that it is now very much part of the folklore and culture of Durham Constabulary:

*"...Everyone still talks about it. Even now new recruits ask what it was like, what we did and how much money we earned..."*

There does remain a general resentment by officers that the service could have been used, or at least perceived by the general public as being used, as an arm or tool of the Government.

*"...No-one knew where the top decisions were coming from or who was formulating the strategy at what level. Whatever the level, it affected how we were seen to be policing..."*

*"...The Mutual Aid, (deployment of other forces in County Durham), had an adverse effect - the pickets saw them as 'foreigners' and we became 'foreigners' as well. I think it was the first time the public saw us*

*as a national force...."*

*"... We were blatant and provocative taking one miner into the pit when there were hundreds of pickets outside and there is no doubt that we were used to break up the strike...."*

There are broader issues revealed here and these findings will be analysed in the next chapter. But the situation then, and the legacy now, has been a negative effect on police corporate image.

▶ *Pressure groups*

The final 'environmental' influence discussed by respondents of the focus groups on police corporate image is the effect of pressure groups. There was a consistency of views expressed during the discussions that the police service and the advocates of civil liberties such as Liberty (formally National Council for Civil Liberties or N.C.C.L.), are in opposing camps. Civil liberties campaigners were described by some as "*left wingers or reds*" and their activities dismissed with rancour.

Recent publicity over such cases as the Guildford Four or Birmingham Six and the ensuing controversy over twenty years has, this research uncovered, if anything, hardened internal police attitudes to pressure groups. The public doubts expressed about police investigative techniques are, in some cases, dismissed by the respondents in the

focus groups because the 'guilty' were 'guilty anyway' and merely 'got off on a technicality' because of pressure brought to bear by civil liberties campaigners.

There was a divergence of opinion as to the extent to which the publicity surrounding the events highlighted by pressure groups actually affect police image:

*"....Does anyone really believe these highly publicised cases reflect badly on the police? Personally - although obviously I'm speaking as an insider - I see it effects the justice system generally not specifically the police..."*

*"....While no police officer has actually been convicted of corruption the mud sticks, and is frequently thrown by left wing groups, to the police service...."*

*"....I know that the media campaigns by civil liberties campaigners effects how the public see us. On Friday and Saturday nights as the pubs turn out you just have to listen to the abuse (relating to the allegations of corruption cases)...."*

It would be difficult to quantify the effect of pressure groups on the corporate image of Durham Constabulary but the general perception of the respondents is that the effect is a negative one.

e) *Summary of findings on environmental influences*

Broadly speaking, community policing is about emphasising and encouraging the development of preventative and non conflict aspects of policing and giving them more status than they currently have within the police organisation and more impact outside of it.

Although it is possible to conceive of a police officer acting in an impartial and objective manner, the reality is that in almost every case the officer uses some degree of discretion or personal judgement. People in all occupations have expectations about what their job will be like, based upon previous experience, the experience of others, training, the rules of the job and so on. The research here have shown that what Durham Constabulary officers' actually do when they meet the public is, in a large part, a reflection of their expectations both in the way the job should be done and specifically in relation to particular circumstances. So, far from 'meeting community expectations', they are in fact meeting their own.

The impact on the corporate image of the organisation is that the officers' expectations - brought about by personal values, also general legal and social norms, as well as the attitudes of individual members of the public which they meet - bear upon the way they and public behave.

With regard to law or legislation as an influence on image, the findings show a tension in policing between a desire of officers to see the job as one of dealing with crime, and the

reality that much of the demand for the police service involves issues of public order, of civil law or miscellaneous matters best described as social service problems. In terms of public order many officers characterised their images of demonstrators and pickets at industrial disputes as '*militant, violent, extremists and politically motivated troublemakers*'. On the basis of the officers' stereotypical image of situations involving public order, the response and reaction, while perhaps legally defensible, can be harmful to police corporate image.

*f) Communication influences - external communication*

Communication influences in this context means marketing and news reporting, as well as paid for advertising, and also includes communications directed at internal groups.

*"....There is no obligation on the police to assist the press by providing information for publication. The view is sometimes expressed that the police are obliged to go out of their way to ensure newspapers are supplied with information deemed of interest to the public. This seems to be based on a misconception of the positions of both the police and the press...."*

*Home Office Report (1939)*

Developments from the situation described above, which was tantamount to a policy of non co-operation with the media have, however, occurred.

The Press Office of any organisation is the link between that body and the media in general - newspapers, radio and television. The office supplies information and provides facilities to the media on request as well as taking steps to initiate news and favourable comment. Confidence and respect are a necessary basis for this relationship, but problems arise between the police press office and the media particularly in respect of freedom of information.

There is a pressure from the public, (the media acting as their agent), to have access to all information, but in the past, in the view of the author as a police press officer, this was balanced by the organisational view that there is a need for protection of both the individual and society. Police officers have a direct responsibility to law and are required to make a professional judgement between the advantages of disclosure and the possible repercussions on either investigation or criminal proceedings.

Good communication is interactive and plays a role of great importance both in the formation of corporate image and in present day policing. The support and co-operation of the public and from it professional effectiveness of the police organisation, relies heavily upon it. In recent years a more open policy of dealing with the media and the formation of professional civilian police press officers, has developed a more balanced news coverage of police affairs. Durham Constabulary employ two professional, (now non police), media personnel in the press and public relations office. Most of the work carried out by the police is neither secret or confidential and there is no reason why the public should not be kept informed of police activities.

The findings of the focus groups show that, in some quarters, the spirit of openness among police officers in Durham Constabulary has remained underdeveloped and in some others it has been wilfully stifled. What was traditional antipathy towards the press and media has in some cases now set hard in prejudice. For example:

*"....I try to avoid contact with the media. I tell communications (the department who answer calls in each police station) to tell them I'm out of the office - they're only trouble - I'm not here as a news service...."*

*"....They're (the press) parasites - they'll never get owt from me...."*

The focus group discussions also found that officers frequently complained about unbalanced reporting of incidents. Questioning however, revealed that Durham Constabulary officers had made little or no contribution to provide a balance to the story:

*"....Well we shouldn't have to justify or tell them anything about what we did or how we did it - that's our responsibility not theirs...."*

In Section 20 of the Durham Constabulary Orders concerning press and public relations, the philosophy and systems of media contact are clearly stated as force policy:

*"....The theme of the Force policy in dealing with the media is to be open and frank on all matters... Sub-Divisional Commanders should*



*ensure that a system exists within the Sub-Division for releasing information to the media. The Sergeant in charge of communications at a Sub-Division is responsible for maintaining a Press Log...."*

Despite the above orders it was found that there is, in practice, no formal or structured system of dealing with the media. It is very much an ad hoc response.

Further findings from the focus groups reveal that few, if any, officers thought in terms of being proactive with the media. For example:

*"....To be honest I would never consider approaching the media. I think my officers would view it as patronising if I tried to get their picture in the paper for good work...."*

*"....No I never contact them - but I am aware they regularly ring the Sub-Division. I could use them if required...."*

*"....Well about twice a shift I speak to the press - but this is in response to their calls - I haven't ever seen the necessity or had the desire to approach them...."*

The attitudes noted were of distrust, cynicism and avoidance of the media. As one of the prime determinants of corporate image is the media, the attitudes held will have a negative effect on the perception of the service.

Previous mention was made of the Force Order on the system of media relations from Sub-Division with the role of Commanders and supervision outlined. There was, however, found to be no system for releasing information to the media. There was no press log visible or maintained in any of the Sub-Divisional offices in the County and the specific form designed for use as a log was not available in the stations visited.

**g)            *Communication influences - internal communication***

Whether or not the systems and actual procedures for communicating externally are adequate, the other aspect of this particular component and influence of corporate image is internal communication and marketing.

*"...The internal audience of an organisation is often the most important audience of an identity programme. It is the employees who will determine whether an organisation is able to meet its objective or not. it is the employees who will determine the product quality. And it is the employees who will determine the corporate image...."*

*Ind (1990) p. 39*

It has been previously stated that the police service is a rigid hierarchy, (Chapter Six p. 144 ante). A number of studies have considered the hierarchical effects on communication from different perspectives. From the corporate image perspective a

number of dilemmas were uncovered during the focus groups which would influence the corporate image of the organisation.

There was much evidence of a 'top down' communication in Durham Constabulary. There were also findings which emphasised a considerable duplication and over distribution of information from the higher levels of the hierarchy - a 'just in case' philosophy:

*"...We just get inundated with paper - most of it I do little more than scan now..."*

*"...I seem to spend the majority of my time shuffling and filing paper - I can't even remember a quarter of it - but if I think that it's a new policy or procedure I have my own file in a drawer so that I can never get caught out and I can look things up..."*

This appeared to be widespread among the Sergeants' groups - who are at a level in the organisation responsible for supervision and quality control. The majority constantly referred to memoranda, instructions and policies which they 'meticulously' kept personally in order not to be 'caught out'.

There was little seen of segmenting or targeting communication, which some authors have referred to as 'narrowcasting', according to what attitudes or behaviours are wanted from the target audience. This is encapsulated in one comment made by a manager:

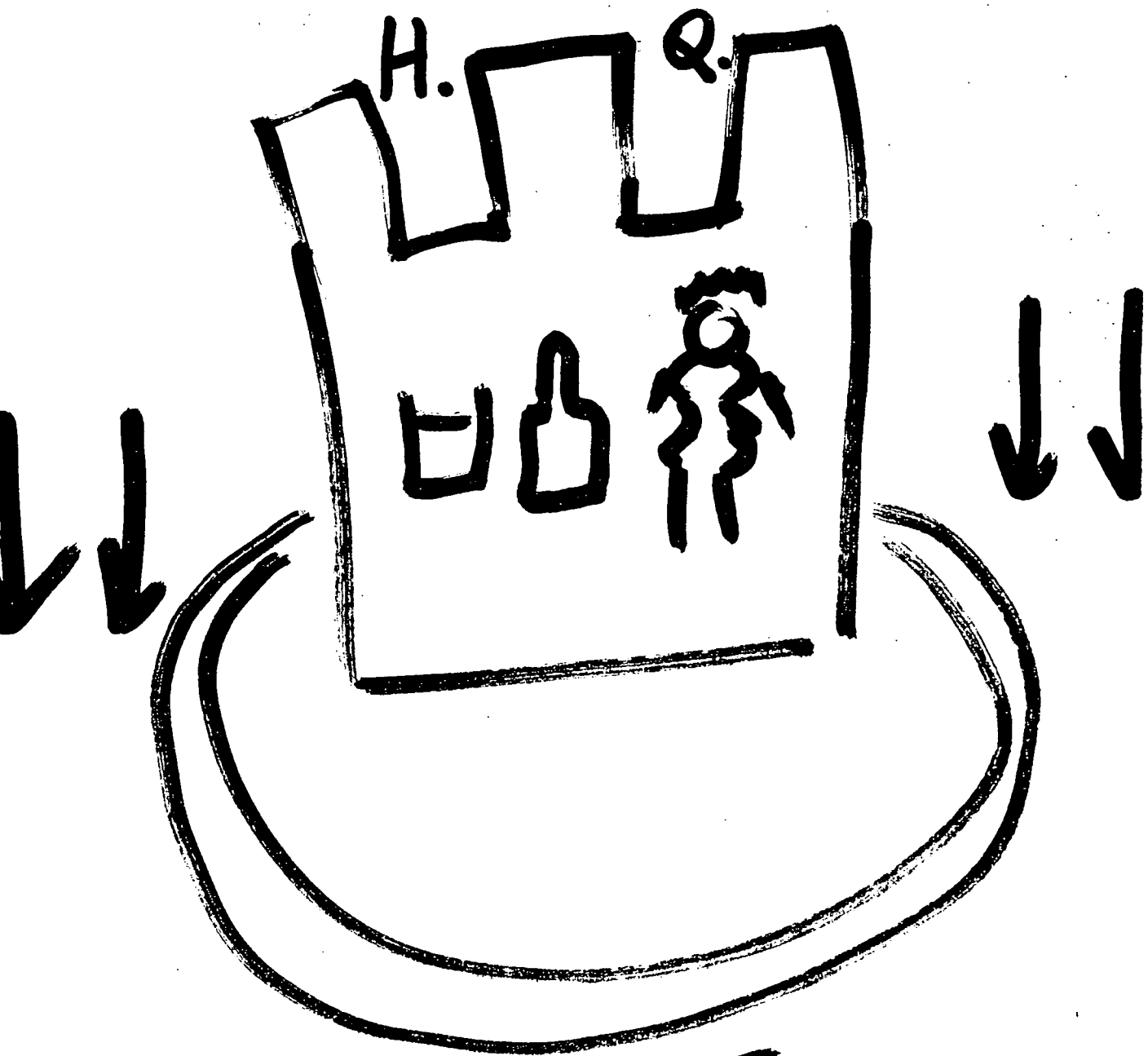
***"....Well I distributed that to everyone - they should all know that..."***

which was not, of course, addressing specific issues.

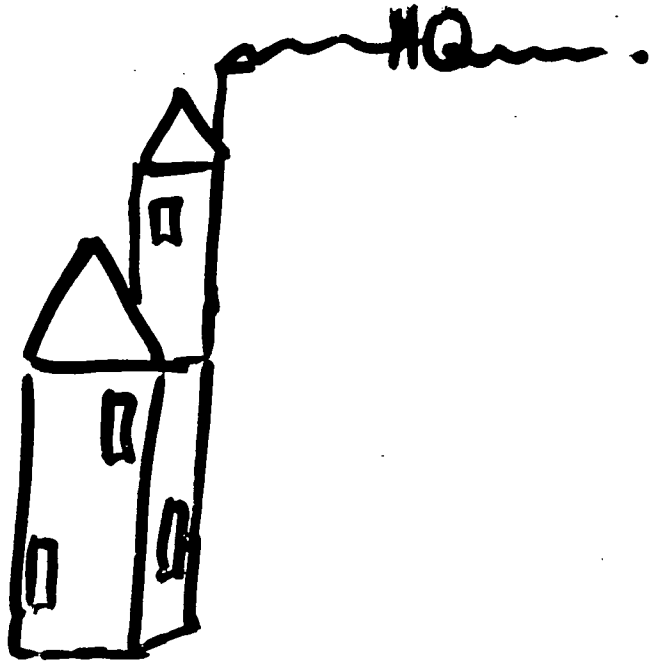
During focus group discussions the symbols and adjectives relative to local and senior management of Durham Constabulary revealed that, for example, they are believed to be '*detached, dreamy, aloof, unaware, dictatorial and nepotistic*' and symbolised by ivory towers, clouds and walls as barriers to the employees. A number of examples are given overleaf:



Runde H.Q.  
Dictatorial  
insensitive



A LOOF  
DISTANT  
EMPIRE BUILDIN  
EGOTISTICAL



UNAPPRECIATIVE  
BEAUCRATS  
IGNORANT

When displayed, the group interpreted the drawings in a very robust way:

*"....They just say it all The only surprise is that the language used is temperate. I could add a few choice adjectives...."*

*".... I couldn't agree more. We face the crap and they pile more on top of us...."*

The individual 'artists' chose not to be defensive and added to their pictorial views in general discussion. There was vehement condemnation of senior managers being totally out of touch with the reality of the current policing situation '*on the streets*'. (The significance of the strength of these negative images of management will be analysed in Chapter Eight).

The images and descriptions generated much discussion and revealed a paradoxical situation. On the one hand respondents appeared to be suggesting that senior managers needed to re-establish contact with the realities of the day to day policing situation:

*"....They don't know what's going on at the sharp end..."*

*"....When was the last time they were out on the streets - if they don't know whats going on how can we have faith in them or even expect them to make rational judgements about what we should be doing...."*



However, the same patrolling officers revealed that they don't actually want to see managers 'on the streets':

*"...I'd rather they kept themselves in the office or Headquarters I wouldn't want them poking their noses in...."*

*"...It's bad enough having to pretend to toe the party line but if you've got to constantly keep looking over your shoulder to see who's around the job would be intolerable. It's the freedom to operate that I think is essential...."*

A number of internal communications initiatives have recently been embarked upon within the Constabulary in order to increase communication, impart policy and philosophy and inform officers of objectives and standards. These include a newsletter, posters of mission statement and objectives, a handbook guide to improved performance, and an in-house video production.

All of the differing perspectives of internal communication also emphasise the need for lateral and upward communication as well as top down communication. In Durham Constabulary this is particularly affected by two factors: the hierarchical nature of the organisation, and the specialist departments within the organisation.

Further evidence highlighting these factors was found in the focus group discussions. In an organisation which traditionally has secured compliance and rewarded employees with

promotion, status and power; information is seen as a resource that symbolises status, enhances authority and shapes careers. Hierarchy in this context is conducive to concealment and misrepresentation of information. The subordinates in the focus groups perceived that to transmit information may in turn be used to evaluate their performance:

*"...It's not long ago that a suggestion scheme was introduced which I think in essence was good - because we know at grass roots level what is going on and can make suggestions - but I think it's safer to keep your head down and just do enough to get noticed..."*

*"...We are removed from Divisional and Force H.Q so the only way they (senior managers) know what we're doing is through paperwork. I keep mine to a minimum and don't rock the boat..."*

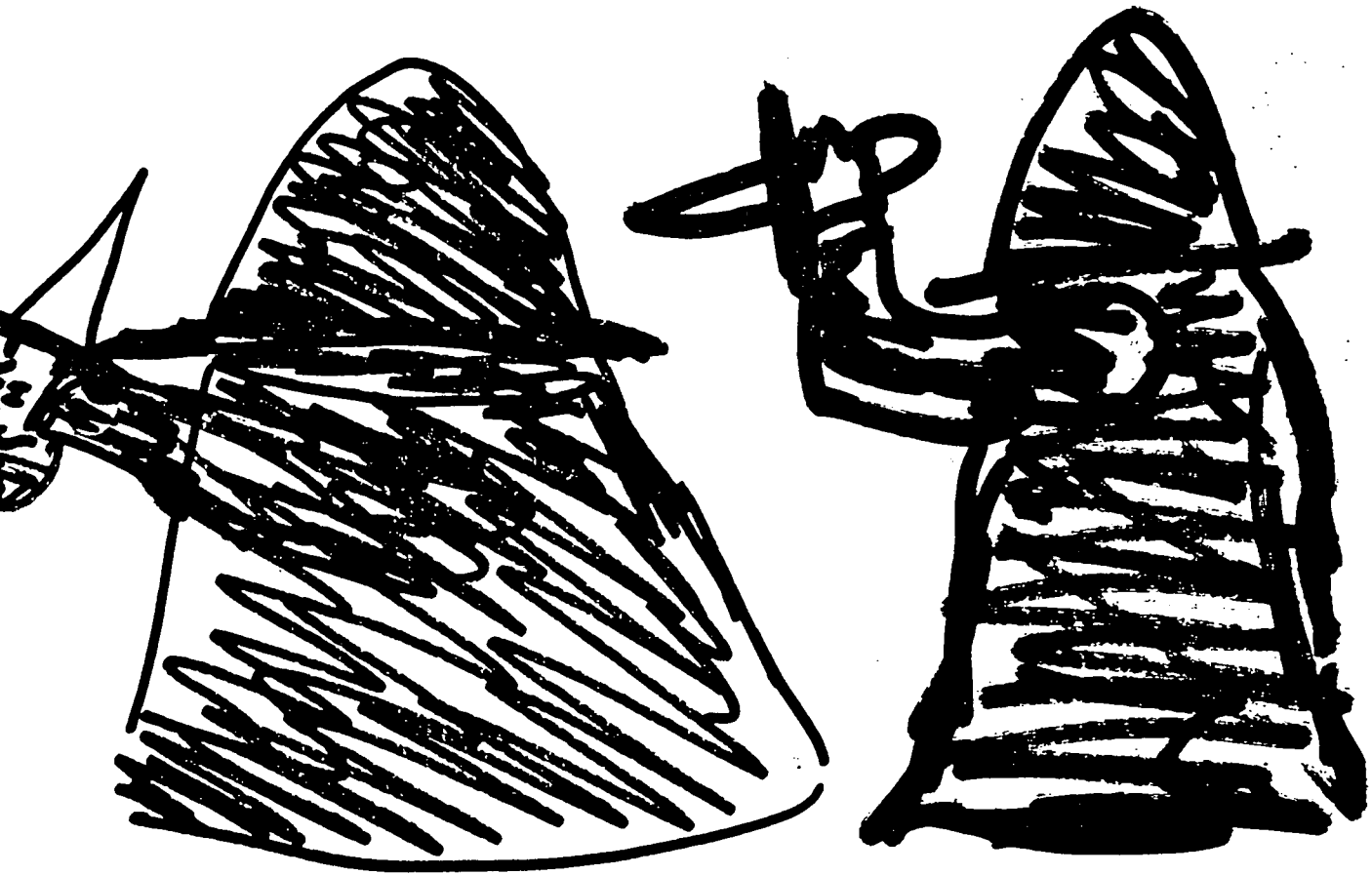
The motive for 'getting noticed' or for 'playing it safe' is obvious. If the administrative style and symbolism or images emphasises rank, there will be an upward block on the flow of information.

As a source of information and communication blockage and distortion, 'specialisation' may be more powerful than hierarchy. It was very apparent, and very consistently found, that specialist departments within Durham Constabulary encourage rivalry and restriction of information - the lines of communication have become lines of loyalty and secrecy - with each department restricting information that might advance the competing interests of others.

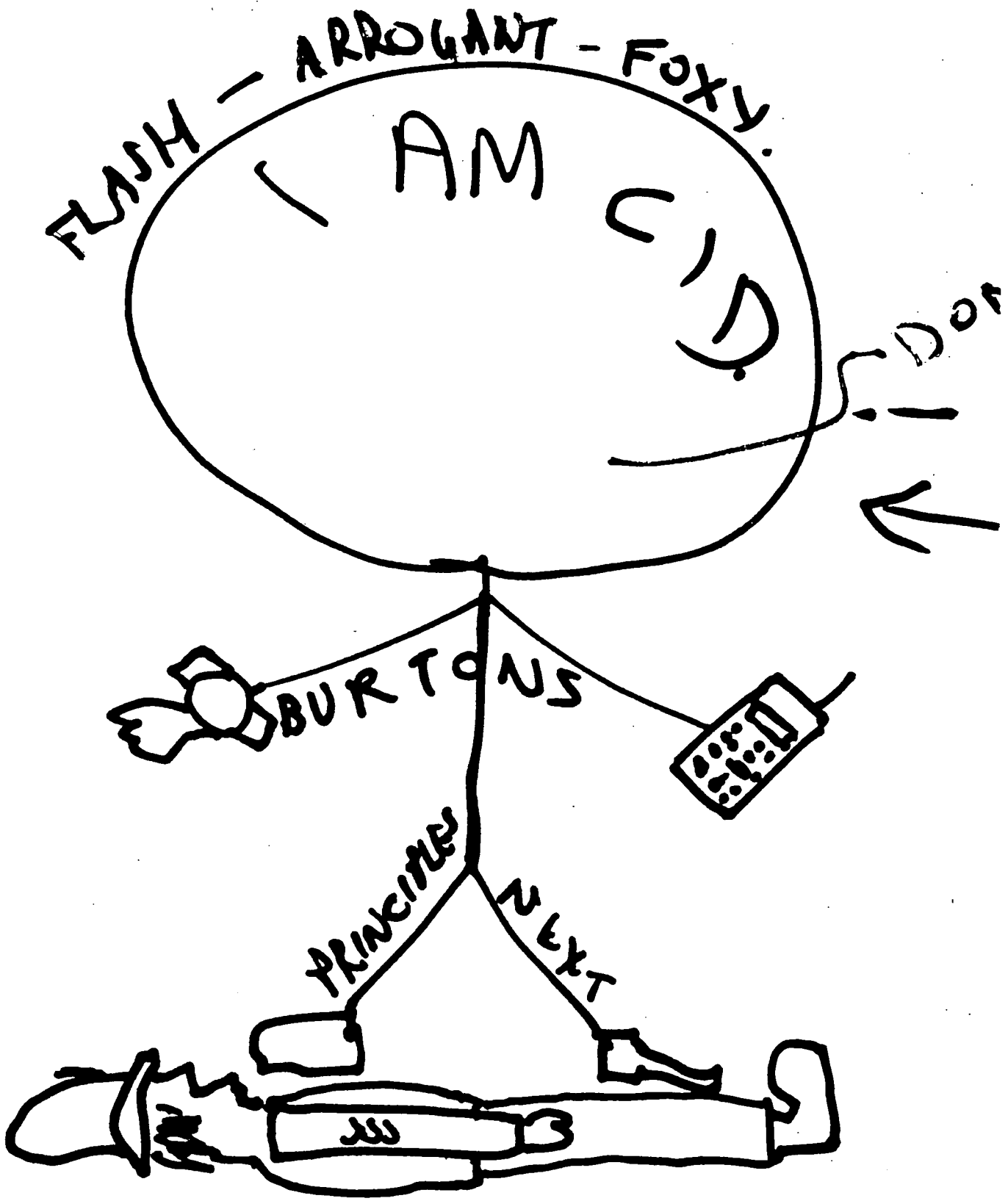
This is graphically illustrated in many of the focus groups' images drawn, and descriptions given of other departments, by respondents. For example, the C.I.D. are regarded by other departments as: *'flash, arrogant, foxy, elitist, uncommunicative, devious, big guns, sharks, remote and conceited'*. Traffic Department are regarded as: *'hypocritical, aloof, disloyal, superior, black rats, untrustworthy, sneaky, sly and trivial'*.

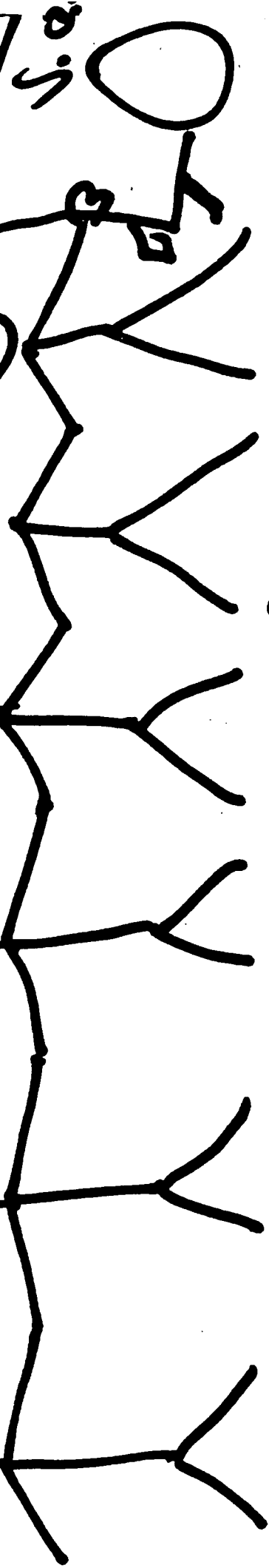
A number of examples of the images portrayed of these and other departments are given overleaf:

# SQUADS

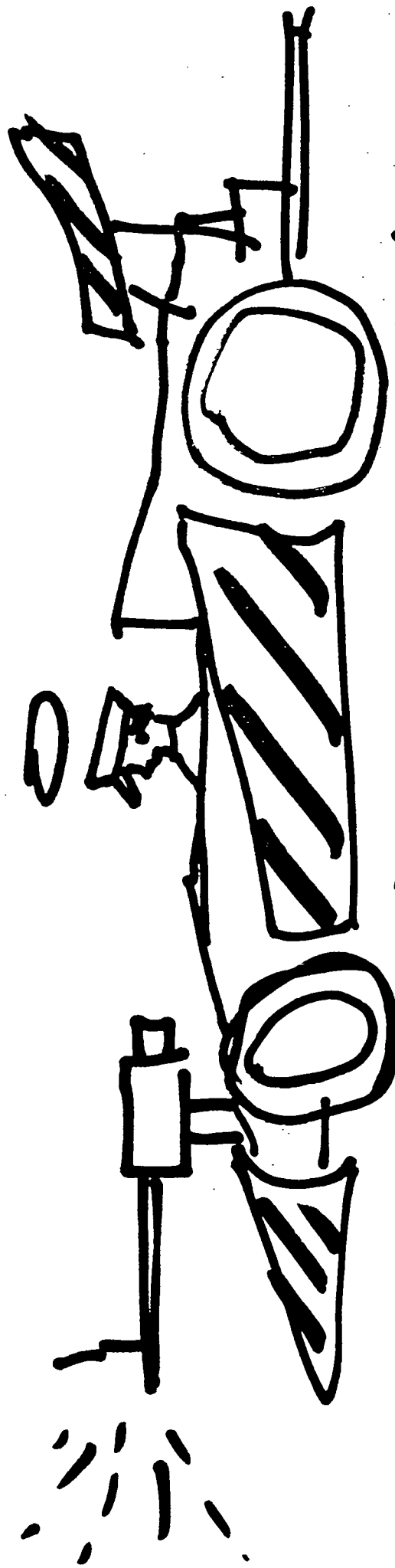


DEVIOUS,  
COVERT.

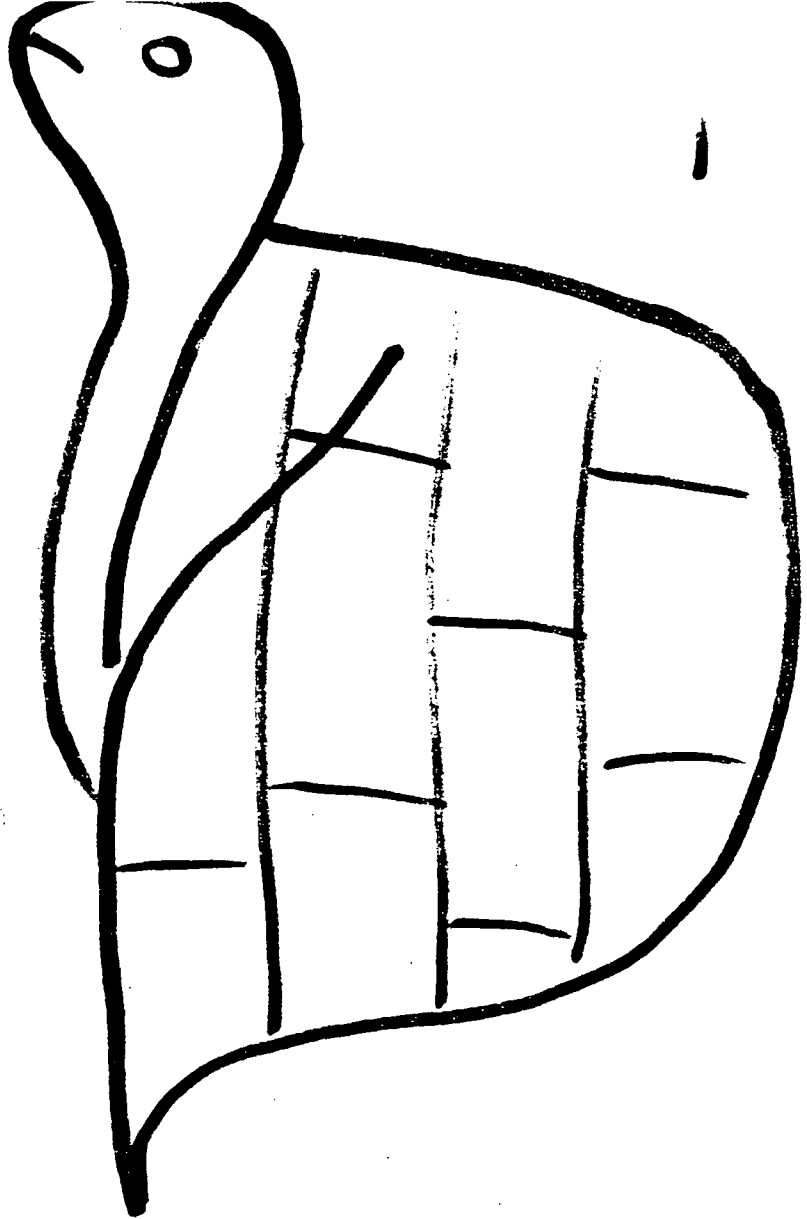




USEFUL. SEPERATE. COMBOYS



HIRROBIT - ALOOF - DISLOYAL.



SLOW

LAZ-1

UNMOTIVATED

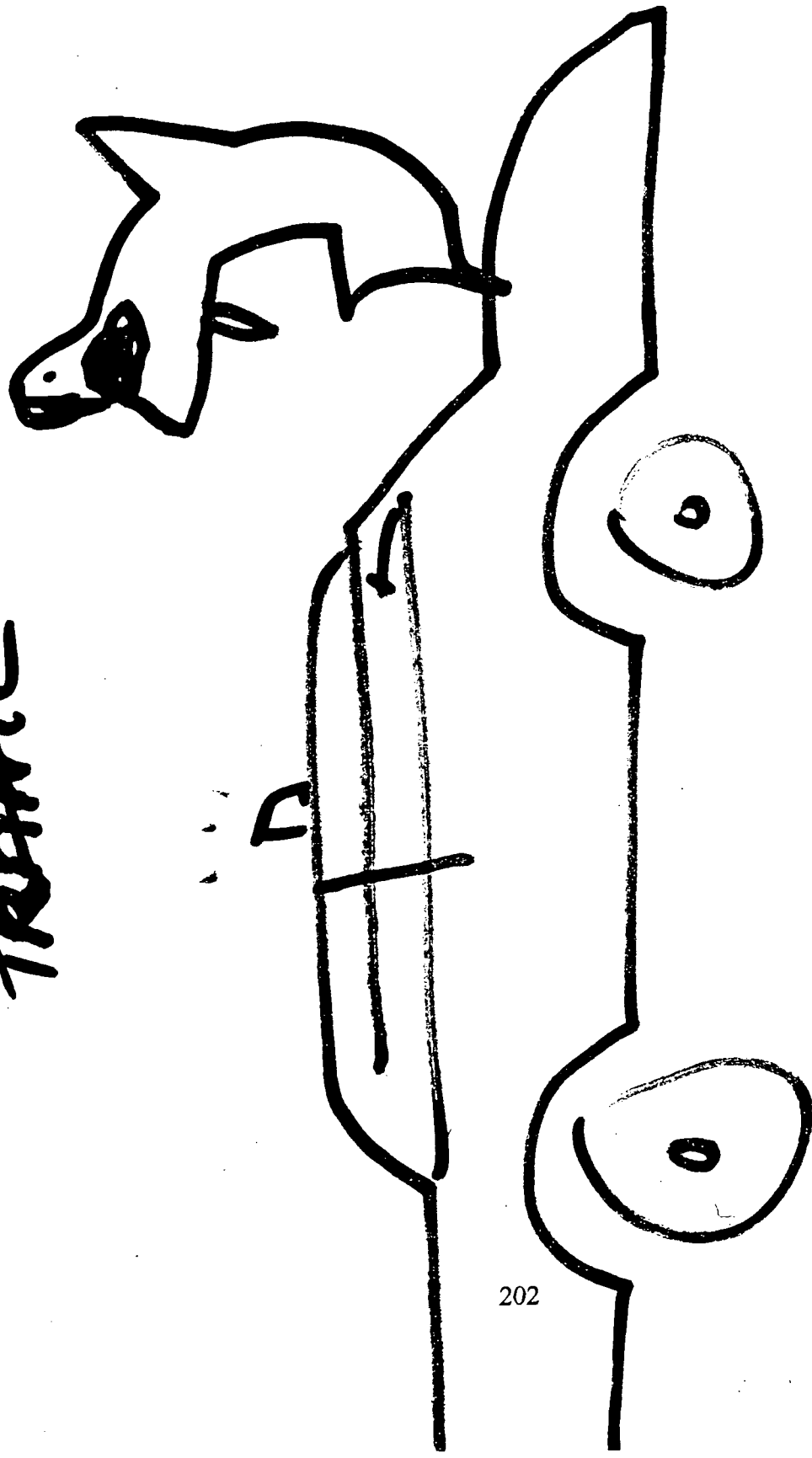
614 GUNDS.

CID





**TRAP**



**HUNTERS  
PERSICUTORS**

**SLY**

The groups interpretations of these drawings revealed much about the sub-cultures within the force:

*"...It doesn't take Einstein to work out that Mick is bitter and twisted about C.I.D. - and he's right although they're not all like that - just most!...."*

*"....I think all he's captured is all our views on Traffic. It used to be a department you aspired to - it had a certain status - now its a bunch of posey cowboys...."*

The actual artists attempted to defend or justify their portrayal of their colleagues:

*"....It's a bit of a joke - not to be taken seriously - I don't really have that strong a down on them - I just like to take the piss out of them...."*

*"....I'm not sure you should read too much into the drawings. I was just trying to capture my thoughts about traffic and it's all I could think of as a picture...."*

In the general discussion, which followed the display of the illustrations, the rivalry was revealed as a negative form of competitiveness:

*"....Its almost childish and very petty. While on the surface we may all seem to get on together I think CID think they're elite and better than us so I wouldn't go out of my way to give them anything (information) unless I thought I could personally get something out of it...."*

*"....Traffic are the worst. They're prima donnas or act like them. Its about time they got down from their pedestals or cars and actually did some real police work. They don't give us back up either which I think is what should be the main part of their duties. They're probably washing their cars...."*

The parochialism and the barriers to communication engendered by the specialised departments were also found to be cultural influences which will be further reported later in the chapter.

#### ***h) Summary of communication influences***

The findings of the focus groups show that there are barriers to effective external and internal communication within Durham Constabulary.

Communication externally is limited, and viewed negatively by respondents, despite senior management's espoused policies of openness and frankness with the media. There was evidence of distrust and cynicism towards the media which acted as a barrier to external communication.

Internally communication, it was found, is limited by both the rigid hierarchical nature of the organisation and by the rivalry and internal divisions between specialist posts and departments.

*i) Summary of the findings of the design perspective influences*

It has been shown that, from the design perspective, in the research on the public image, the environmental and the communication influences on corporate image that all are interrelated with central questions highlighted about who the service is accountable to and what the exact purpose of the organisation is.

On public image influences as a component of police corporate image, it has been that the image of Durham Constabulary is more positively held by members of the public with no direct contact with the service. The actions of officers in their contact with the public has a negative effect on the image of the service

On the environmental influences of legislation and social and economic issues it was found that these bear heavily upon the policing service provided to the general public and therefore will continue to influence the corporate image of the organisation.

Additionally, proactive policy in pursuit of increased external communication may lead to an improved image of the organisation. Increased internal communication may also impact upon the work culture and ethic and again influence the image of the

organisation. The findings of the research show that currently barriers exist to both suggested developments.

Moreover, all the influences mentioned above are bound up with the cultural factors of police behaviour which it is suggested here are a prime determinant of their corporate image and these will be addressed in the next sections of this chapter.

*j) Cultural influences on Durham Constabulary corporate image*

The components and influences on corporate image most closely aligned to the cultural perspective were presented in the model in Chapter Two, (p. 21 ante), namely: the service provided by; the employee image of; and the corporate culture of, the organisation. However, what was, and is, emphasised is the multidimensional and interdisciplinary nature of corporate image and that no single factor determines the corporate image of an organisation.

From the design perspective findings reported earlier in this Chapter, a consistent theme was identified; that of the effect and impact of culture on the organisation. It is the specific cultural components of corporate image outlined above that will provide the framework for the findings in the next sections.

**k) *The influences of service on corporate image***

This component and influence on corporate image was defined, Chapter Two (p. 21 ante), as the 'evaluated' image of the organisation held by those with previous service contact, or 'usage', of the police. In the case of the police service, both locally and nationally, a central question concerns what is the service expected and provided by the organisation.

Earlier, the issues of '*meeting community expectation*' and providing a service '*locally based and sensitive to community needs*' were addressed (pp. 173-175 ante). In this section the focus will be on the internally held perceptions of the policing service which should be, and is, offered. In other words the findings on what the actual service delivery is.

A conclusion of the *Gorton Services (1992)* survey of public opinion on policing service provided by Durham Constabulary officers was that:

***"...The more contact the public has with the police the less positive they will view the Force..."*** ***p. 7***

Although there was a high level of satisfaction with the service noted in this survey, the main reasons for dissatisfaction were that there was a perception that officers did not show an interest in the problem of the member of the public:

*"....Encouragement to show more empathy and understanding when dealing with the public may help to lessen this dissatisfaction...."*

*Gorton Services (1992) p. 5*

Service contact and usage is, however, one of the critical components and influences on the corporate image of the organisation.

While the limitations of the findings in this area of service delivery from the internal focus groups has been acknowledged, the respondents were, in fact, self analytical to the extent of both criticising their own service delivery and in signifying that they wanted to improve the service they offered:

*"....I can understand why there are criticisms from the public of us being abrupt - I have been in the past. If we could only convey the pressures we are under simply in terms of the number of tasks to be performed I think we would achieve greater understanding from the public..."*

*"....Some of the criticisms of our incivility are well founded. I do think we have changed - and unfortunately changed for the worse. We don't seem to have time for people any more...."*

A group of Special Constabulary respondents developed this issue regarding the difference between current policing style and that of previous generations. For them it was the central theme of the discussion. For example:

*"....I have noticed a change in attitude since I joined the specials 17 years ago. They (police constables) are much harder now and don't talk to people...."*

*"....They (police constables) make the excuse that they're too busy and haven't got time and they must go to the next job but it is an excuse because I don't think they want to actually want to stay and talk with the I.P's (injured persons or complainants)...."*

*"....The younger ones (police constables) are arrogant. I don't like working with some shifts because their attitude towards people is disgusting...."*

Nevertheless, it was found in the focus groups that almost without exception respondents believed that the service provided was very good - given the constraints that the service was working under. The findings showed that the 'constraints' were offered as a rationalisation for certain conduct, and they were many and various. They ranged from the public attitude to the organisation, to legislation, through to a lack of resources.



During the focus groups there was little evidence of critical and objective analysis of the service provided by officers on a routine day-to-day basis. There was, particularly among officers who were younger in service, an appreciation of the benefits of self appraisal of performance but also an awareness that in reality this seldom occurred. For example:

*"...I was taught how to reflect on my own performance, to keep a diary for example, but I'm afraid that's a bit ideological and in any case I don't think I have the time...."*

*"....At Training School I was self critical and I also sought feedback from my peers - but this is the real world - and I'm not into self flagellation...."*

*"....None of the older officers would think of trying to analyse what they've done or to develop an action plan to improve. I soon established that I would be the object of ridicule if I attempted to even talk about reflective practice or action planning...."*

There was, among all respondents, much discussion surrounding why the service could not be improved. These discussions focused around the workload of individuals. A common theme identified was that the service was overstretched and that officers were exploited and disadvantaged:

*"....There's little doubt why the public get a bad impression of us when we're dealing with something we're always in a rush and flying around. I certainly don't have time for the niceties - I just end up apologising and saying I've got another job to go to...."*

*"....A minority of us, those who are mobile (drive area vehicles) in our Sub-Division, do fly around because it's easy to use us to do jobs. The sick, lame and lazy don't ever seem to get jobs...."*

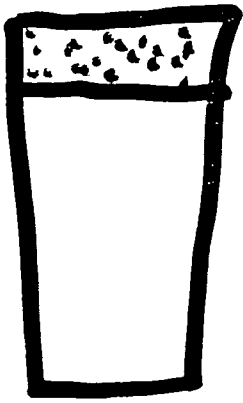
This type of statement was prevalent and was also graphically illustrated by some respondents, for examples see overleaf:

Busy

FRANTIC

OVER-WORKED!





C10

OVERWORKED  
WILLING  
STRESSED

The ensuing discussions on the issues raised further revealed that officers felt that there was a lack of understanding by the general public of the context and pressures that officers were working in which adversely affected the perception of service delivery:

*"....I think we'd be viewed a bit more sympathetically if people actually knew what we had to put up with. Even the shifts affect how we work - working 16 hours out of twenty four on some days like quick change overs (days when officers are required to work 10pm - 6am followed by 2pm - 10pm the same day) means your body doesn't even know what time it is...."*

Overall, in the focus groups, it was found that the current training philosophy, curriculum and methods introduced in 1988 - in order to address quality of service issues - do not appear to have impacted on service delivery.

Another area where significant impact can be made on either service delivery or the perception of the service delivery to the public is the enquiry office. Police station enquiry offices are where many members of the public begin their contact with the police - and first impressions are important.

As part of a British Gas Experienced Managers Programme held at Durham University Business School in 1990, the managers completed a group project on police buildings within Durham Constabulary. One of the requirements of the project was to look at the

police image presented to the public by the buildings. Conclusions were drawn regarding the neglect, dinginess and state of repair of the older stations, which they stated:

*"...Has a direct relationship to the image of the organisation occupying the building, and which gives a poor image of the modern day police...."*

*A Roof over their Heads (1990) p. 3*

During the preliminary research for this thesis, twelve stations in Greater Manchester and nine in Durham Constabulary were visited by the author to evaluate the image projected by the public areas. Many were capable of improvement in terms of image projected and in each force area some projected a negative image of the organisation. The physical condition, especially of the older stations, was poor. The seating provided for members of the public was various - wooden seats, seats with foam cushions, many torn or ripped, seats without backs, and in one station of the three seats provided they were all different - and all damaged in one way or another.

The notice boards, or more correctly what was observed on walls, windows and doors, abounded with a plethora of information. The more notices that were displayed, the more out of date some of them were and the less information of any value they contained. There was a noted lack of consistency and quality about the displays - no 'corporate feel' - merely a conglomeration of messages from full colour national campaign posters to untidy, local, photocopied information.

Some offices did convey a positive impression, for example they were clean, tidy and reasonably well appointed. When enquiries were made to ascertain why there were differences in image projected within stations of a similar age and design, it was found that in those where management had identified an individual responsibility for the office environment there was an improvement:

*"...I know the boss likes the front office tidy and he comes in this way to work. The four of us office staff have been given this office as our responsibility so it's up to us to make sure we don't get bollocked for it being a mess...."*

The work environment was found during the focus groups to affect both the image of the service provided and the work behaviour of those working in the environments. For example, many specifically raised the state of the public areas of the police stations as factors influencing how they operated from the stations:

*"...To some extent you can understand why the town office (enquiry desk) is in such an appalling state, because most of the clientele who use it are from the bottom end of the social scale. But what grieves me, and the lads who have to work there, is that Headquarters gets painted every couple of years. Can you expect us to provide a good service when your shirts get filthy after 8 hours...."*

*"....I would question who decides where the money is allocated. It is, to me, more relevant to spend police funds on operational areas such as the offices than it is on gimmicks such as helicopters and information technology...."*

*"....I don't look forward to coming to work because the office is disgusting. I sometimes think I would have liked to have been a civil servant working in bright, clean offices and they don't have to deal with the 'customers' that we have to...."*

These comments were further reinforced and illustrated by some of the images drawn to depict the work environment. Some were of toilets, others of sinking ships and many with barriers such as walls between the police and the public.

***l) Summary of the findings on the influence of service on corporate image***

Although the expressed policy and philosophy of the police organisation nationally and of Durham Constabulary through statements of purpose and mission statements is a one which emphasises the service ethic, there is little evidence from the findings here to suggest that the policy or philosophy is operational.

Locally, the general public view the police service more positively if they have had no contact with it. It can be argued that this may be due to the idealised, stereotypical nature of police corporate image - which may be more positive in this form than in the



reality of the work situation. However, as most police-public encounters are not of an adversarial nature, everyday contacts of a routine or even mundane nature should in fact enhance the corporate image of the service.

Findings show that officers themselves can understand why service contact with the police organisation can be viewed negatively. This was explained, in the main, to be due to lack of human resources as well as increasing workload.

A further finding was that the work environment, and officers' views of it, appears to affect officers' behaviour and hence influences the general public's perception of the organisation.

*m) Influences of employees image of their own organisation*

This component and influence on corporate image has previously been defined as the way employees see their own organisation, the morale of the employees and their perceptions of the organisation's policies - but only as an employee, not as a user of the service, (Chapter Two p. 21 ante).

In case studies completed by *Kennedy (1977)* on 'Nurturing Corporate Image' the way that employees see their own organisation was termed 'company personnel perception of the company'. The term perception was used to describe the way in which policies are interpreted at different levels of the organisation - dependent on both communication actually received and whether it met the needs of the individual:

*"....It will always be impossible to determine the exact needs of individuals within organisations but it is necessary to acknowledge that these will have an influence on the images formed...."* p. 32

Albeit unwittingly, the positive or negative images held of the organisation by those within it may be communicated externally. It is, therefore, pertinent to examine the responses given in these areas during the focus group discussions involving Durham Constabulary officers.

When asked about their own views of the police, respondents narrowly focused their answers into three major areas:

1. There is dissatisfaction and much concern expressed about staffing levels i.e. how few officers there are available for duty. This was expressed explicitly and implicitly. For example:

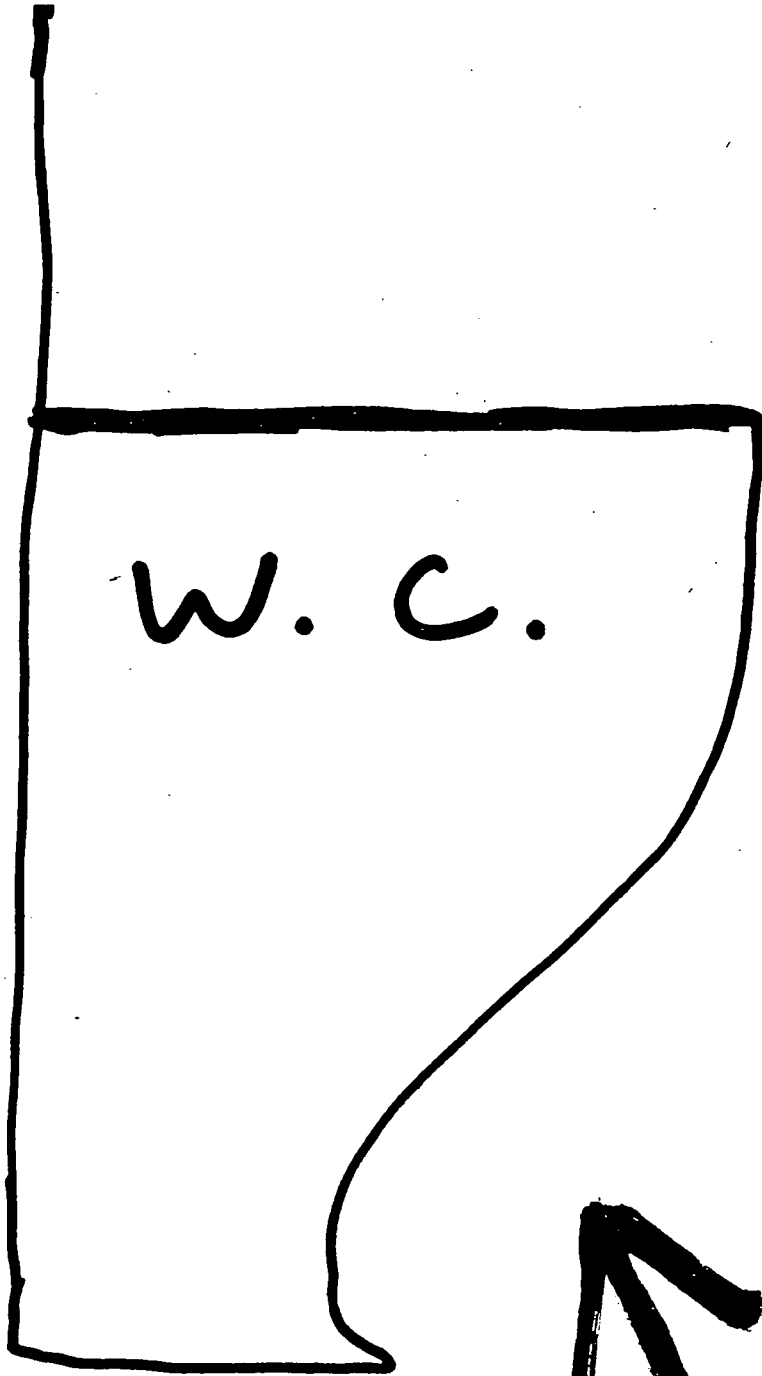
*"....We are handicapped, or to put it even more strongly, completely shackled because we haven't got enough men to actually do the job...."*

*"....I'm sick of hearing about how many more resources we have been given - how many more men are back on the streets. The reality is, and the public would be horrified, sometimes we are turning out just a couple of pandas (police cars) to cover our whole Sub-Division...."*

*"....Its no wonder our image as a service suffers. What other organisation can offer the service we do with so few providing the service...."*

*"....We really need to tell people the truth. Tell them how badly off we are. Then let them decide what our priorities should be. We can't go on like this trying to provide an all round service in lots of different areas. Its just not feasible at current manning levels...."*

The comments were also graphically illustrated in the focus groups where images drawn and descriptions given indicate an 'overworked, beleaguered, backs to the wall, misunderstood, frustrated, stressed, floundering, bloody unorganised' workforce. For examples, see overleaf:



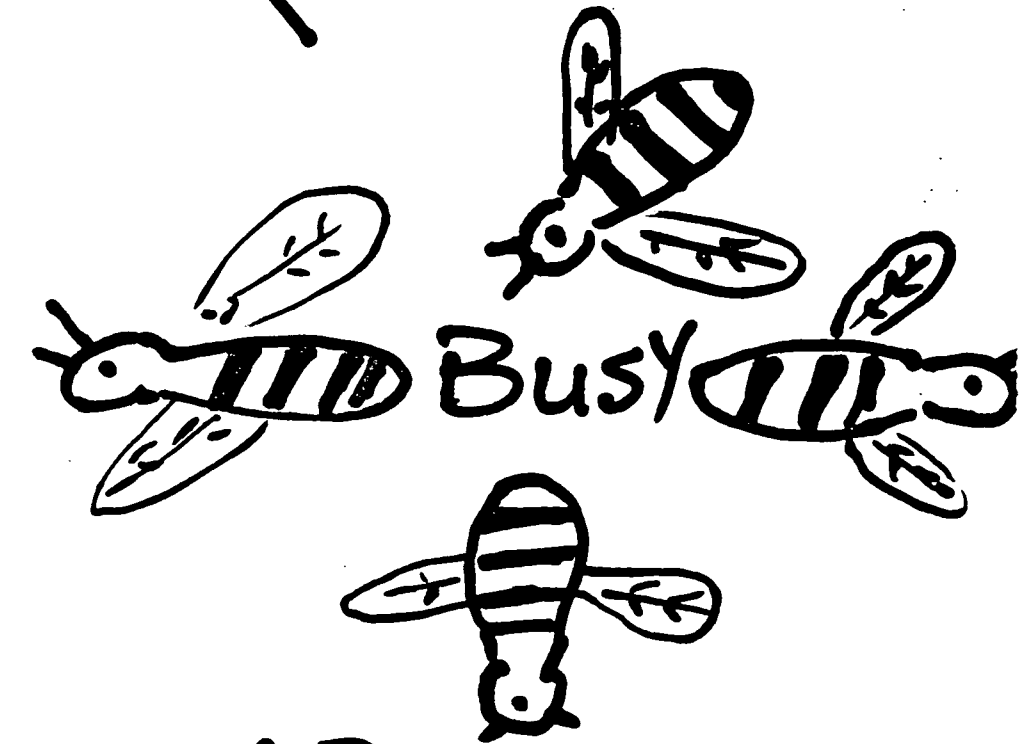
W.C.



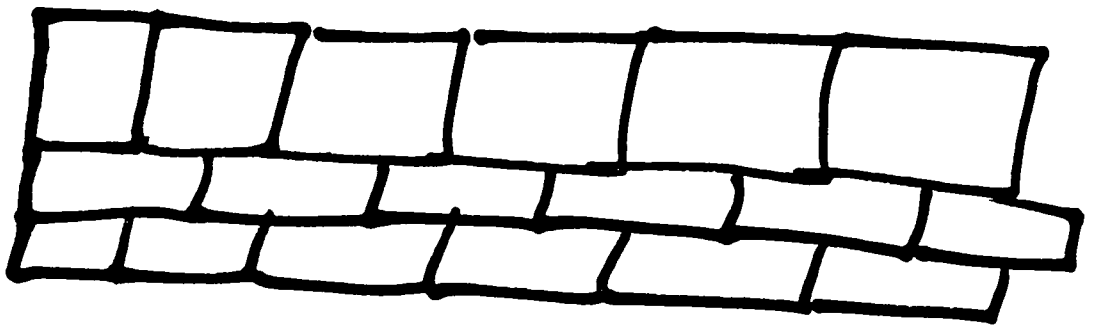
RELIEF

BELEAGUERED

FRANTIC



DIRECTIONLESS



BELEAGUERED

TENSION  
CREAK!  
CREAK!

STRESSED

It can be seen that the images portrayed support the descriptions given.

The individual and group interpretations of their drawings revealed that much of the frustration and the 'overwork' theme came from operational shift officers. These particular officers identified a significant lack of status in their jobs - especially compared to others in the same organisation. One respondent referred to the operational officers being '*the arsehole of the organisation*' and other respondents to, '*the dross*', the '*forgotten few*' and '*the most important but the most frequently crapped upon*'.

2. There are also strongly held negative views, and widespread distrust, of senior management, the Home Office and the Government. For example:

*"....The executive (Assistant Chief Constables and above) are so remote that they have no idea what's going on...."*

*"....Our bosses are detached, living in the clouds, not in the real world...."*

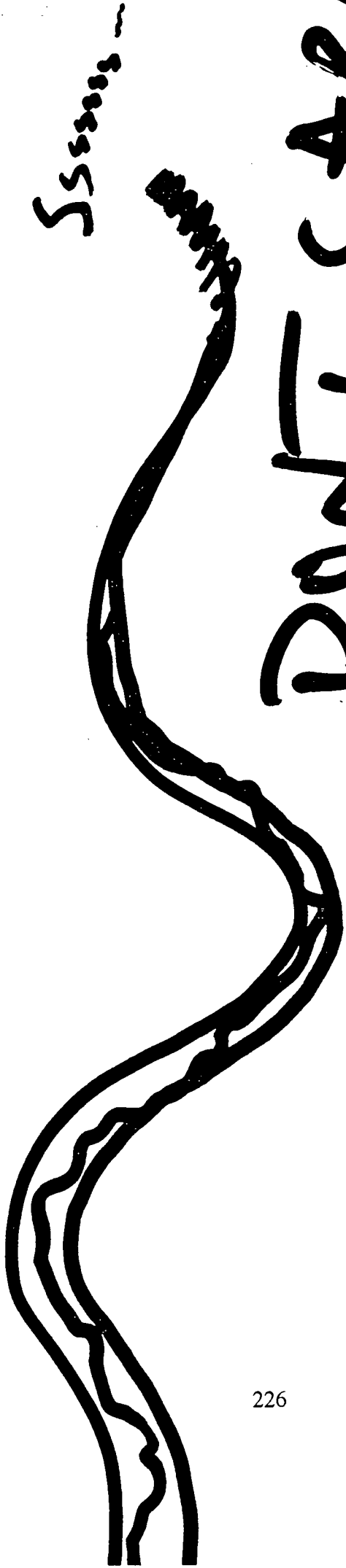
*"....The government and ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) are two faced. Whatever goes on its O.K. it won't affect them. Can any of them accurately answer the question 'what does a police officer do on night shift, or early shift, do they know what we face and what we feel like? They don't know and don't care...."*

These findings were again graphically illustrated with images and descriptions. The most used descriptions of management and government were '*petty, narrow-minded, don't care, dictatorial, humourless, remote, impractical, detached and conceited*'.

These views were supported by images of castles in the sky, clouds and either broken lines of communication or barriers to communication. For examples see overleaf.



Handwritten scribbles on the left side of the page.



DON'T CARE

TWO FACED

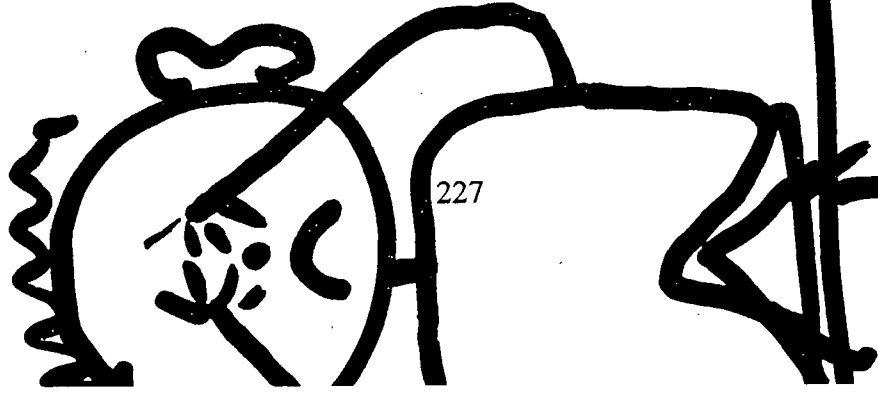
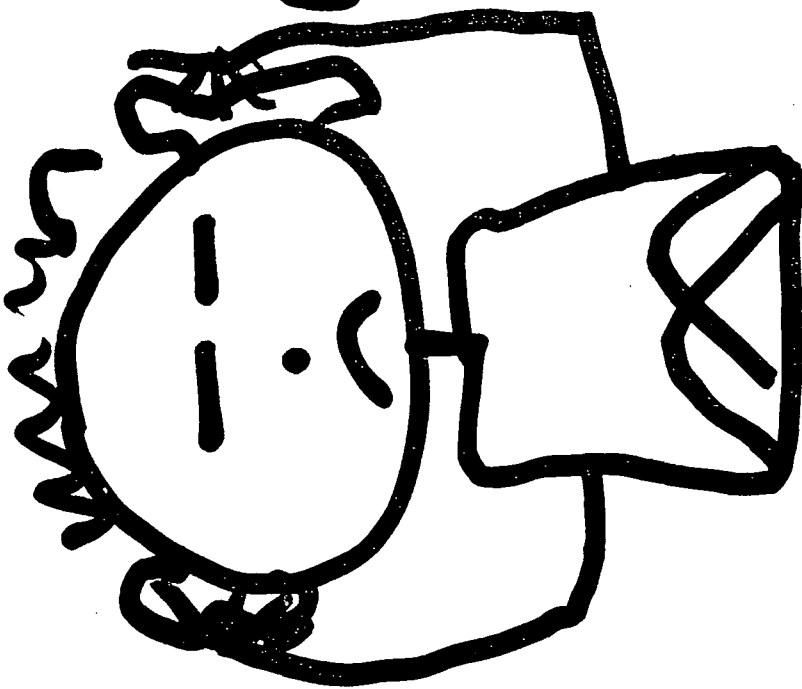
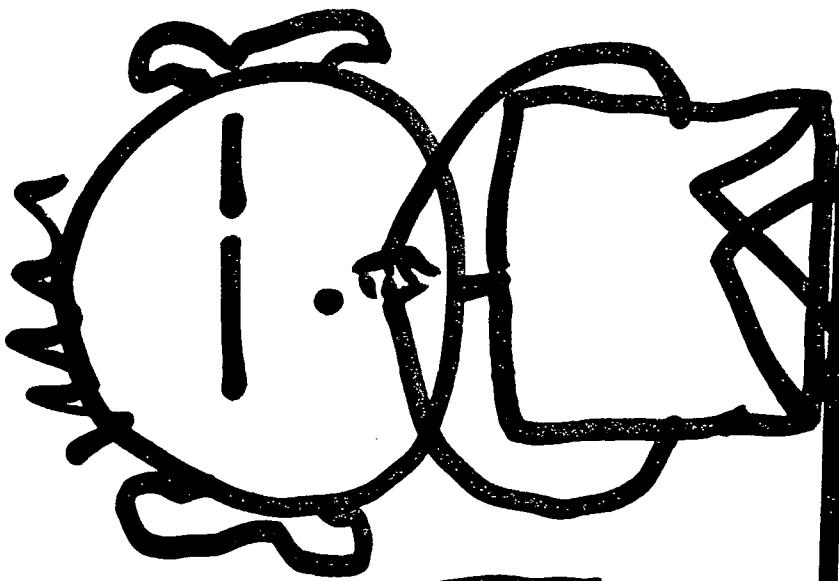
WON'T ADMIT WHEN WRONG

POOR SUPPORT

A C T O

CHANGE F

SAKE



The group interpreted these as indicating that those at the most senior level i.e. Government and Association of Chief Police Officers operated at an entirely different level, remote from, and without any knowledge of policing:

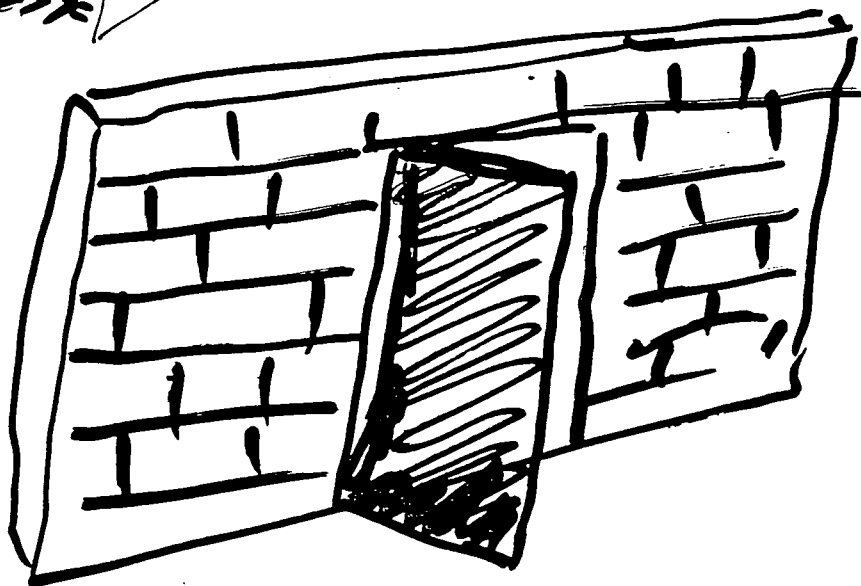
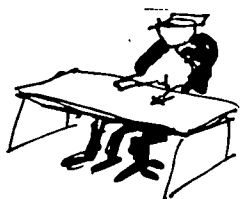
*"....On the one hand the government need to demonstrate that they are the party of law and order - its a vote winner - who wants to live in a lawless society. However, on the other hand they aren't in real terms supportive. It's all a sham - with a complete lack of understanding...."*

*"....The pictures actually say the same to me. That's because chief officers also move in political circles and I would argue are also political puppets. Unfortunately some seem to have forgotten their roots - probably because they can't remember that far back...."*

Furthermore, in the general discussion following these interpretations, the group emphasised how insular they were at an operational level - both through the 'distance' between them and the senior managers and through choice:

*"....I think the pictures only tell half the story. Personally I prefer to be left to my own devices without inteference although I would also like some support - it's a bit of a dilemma really...."*

This view was supported in further portrayals of the situation:



DISTANT.

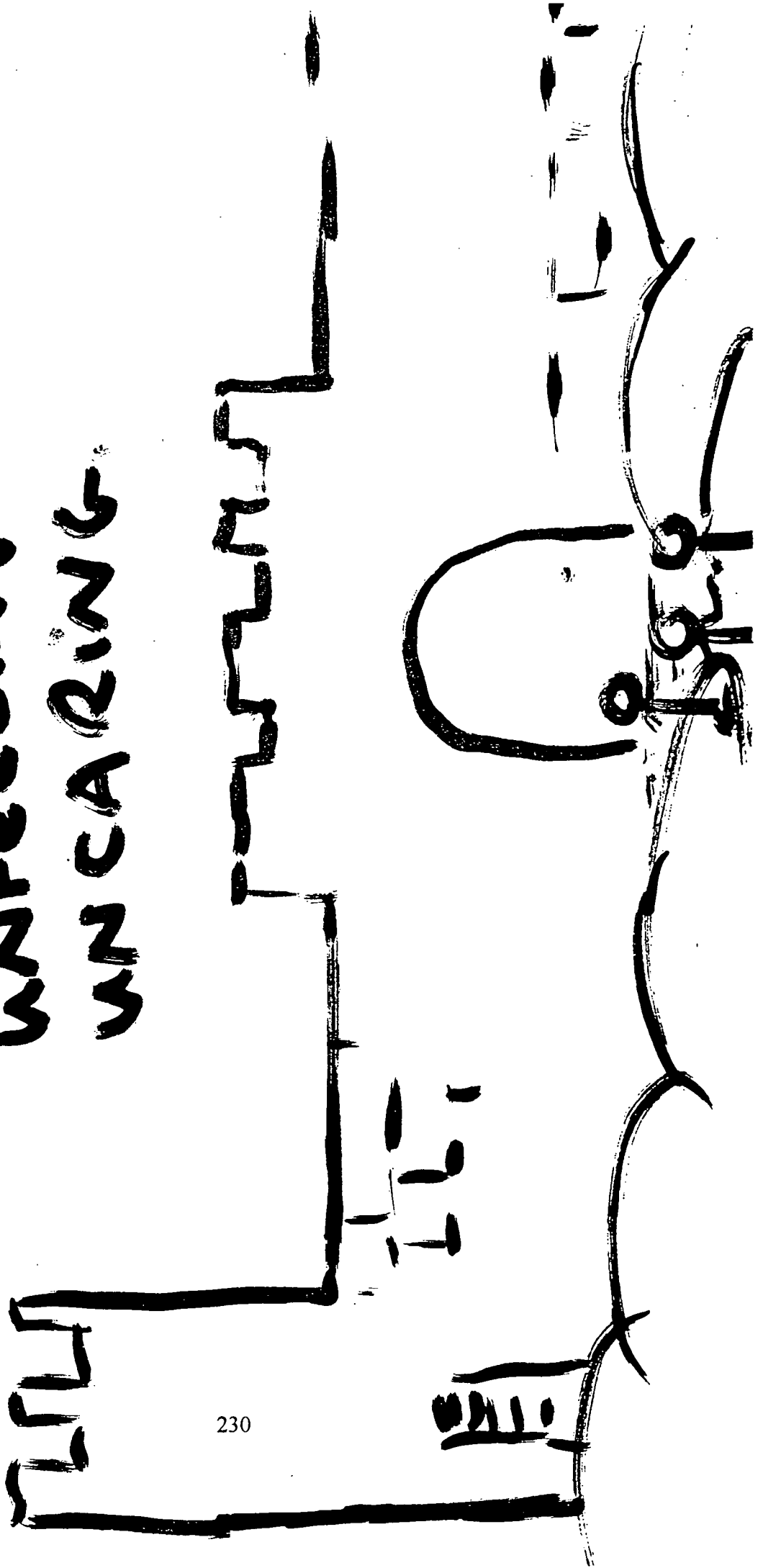
THE BOSS IS ALWAYS RIGHT.  
EVEN WHEN HE'S WRONG,  
UNCARING.



Very Detached

UNFEELING

UNCARING



DICTATORIAL.

UN YIELDING.

~~NEP~~

NEFORTISTIC

← Ivory.

DREAMY, FLOOD, UNFARE.

DREAMY

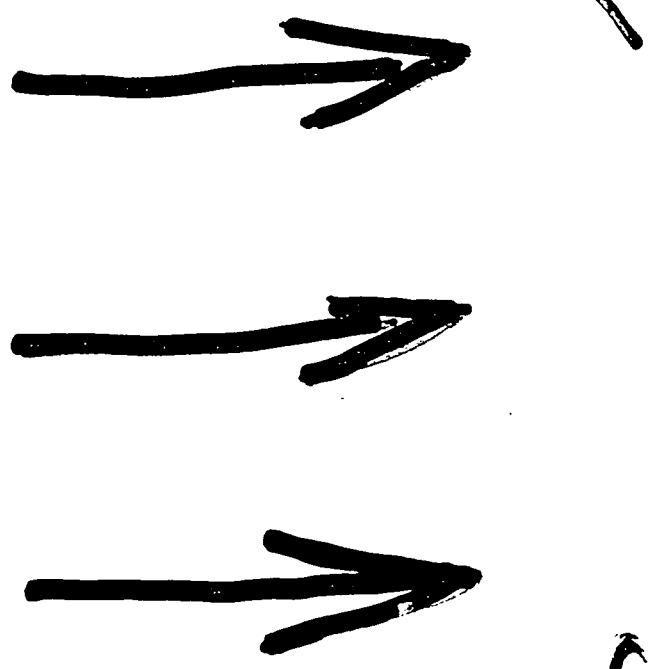
FLOOD

UNFARE



Sr. Management

(AUTOCRAT)  
(REMOTE)  
(DISTANT)



C+D  
(THREATENING)



3. Community policing arguments and solutions are seen as only effective in an idealistic, rural world. Modern policing is seen to have moved away from 'positive' policing to a 'no win', 'soft service' role. Discussions here centred around the difficulties in working to a philosophy or mission of compassion, courtesy and patience, (words from the Association of Chief Police Officers Statement of Common Purpose), when the 'customer' was 'the dregs of society'. For example:

*"...We deal with the dregs of society not the community...."*

*"....What is community policing - it's nothing but a label - and if it means we police as the community want us to, it's a joke. We still police as ever - we respond to whatever is thrown at us...."*

*"....We all know about providing a service and showing the right values, but you tell me how that applies to High Row (busy street in the Town Centre of Darlington Sub-Division) on any Friday or Saturday night...."*

*"....Show me an advocate of community policing and I'll show you a Chief Constable or politician. The theory is fine - but we don't police by theories...."*

The messages given in the groups were clear - that service and quality of service initiatives were ideals and ideals well worthy of aspiration. However, the ideals are having little if any, impact on day to day policing. The images used to depict these

internal perceptions were of either a hierarchy distant and lacking in knowledge of 'street' pressures or a management and public making unrealistic demands for a service.

In another area of questions in the focus groups, respondents were asked for their views of what they believed the public thought about the police.

The answers generated by the second area of questions can be compared and contrasted with the actual views of the public, (pp. 158-59 ante). As a generalisation, the respondents felt that the public had only a very limited, distorted view of the service. Interestingly while it was argued in the previous chapter that the public share a stereotypical image of the police, the respondents in the focus groups shared a stereotype of the public. The 'public' in this sense, as far as the respondents was concerned, was very narrowly focused to offenders or lawbreakers and the descriptive adjectives used on the charts were: *'dishonest, thieving bastards, fickle, apathetic'*. Only in a very small minority of responses were the wider public viewed as 'important'.

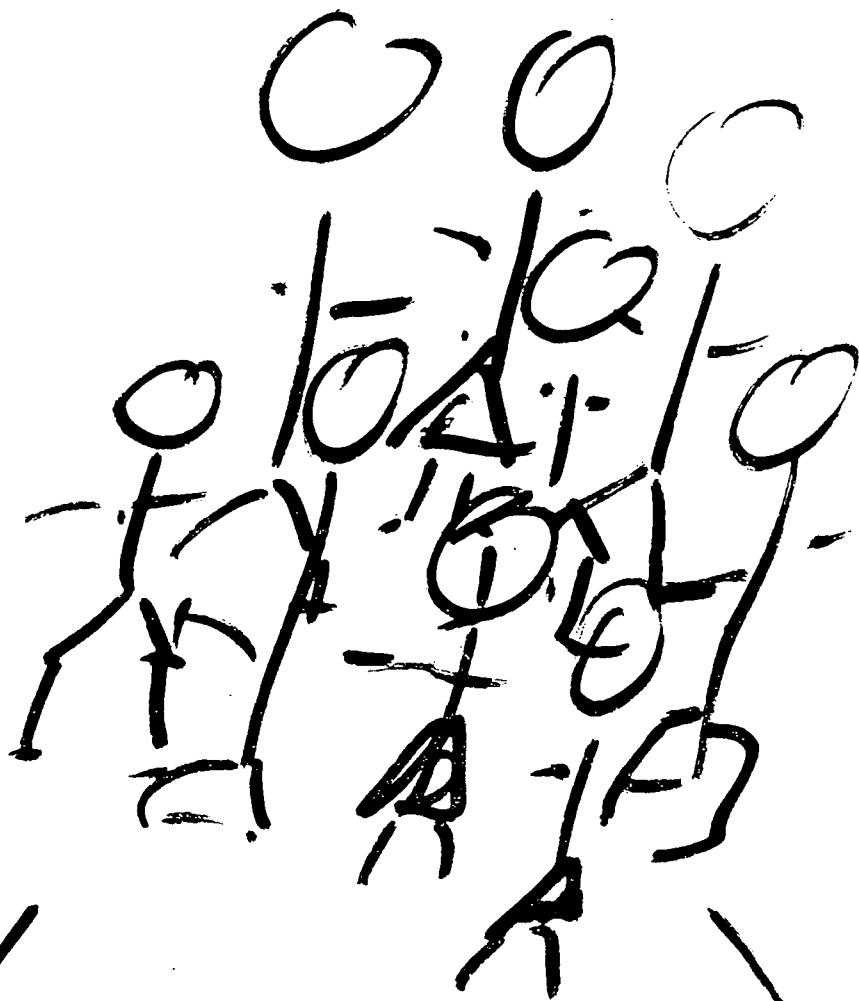
*"....They think we're well paid, thick and lazy. They get their views from television and newspapers...."*

*"....They think we do a good job - then in the next breath call us worse than shite - they don't actually know what we're about...."*

*"...It's them and us. The baddies and the goodies. In many ways it's a game - we only meet a very, very limited number of the public and by that I mean the scum, the parasites - and we play a game. It's the same people and families we deal with all the time..."*

Further evidence of these views is that the vast majority of responses did not include the public on their focus group drawings as 'a group with whom you have important relationships', (focus group worksheet, Appendix 3 p. 395 post). If they did include the public it was in the negative form as mentioned above. For examples see overleaf:

Public

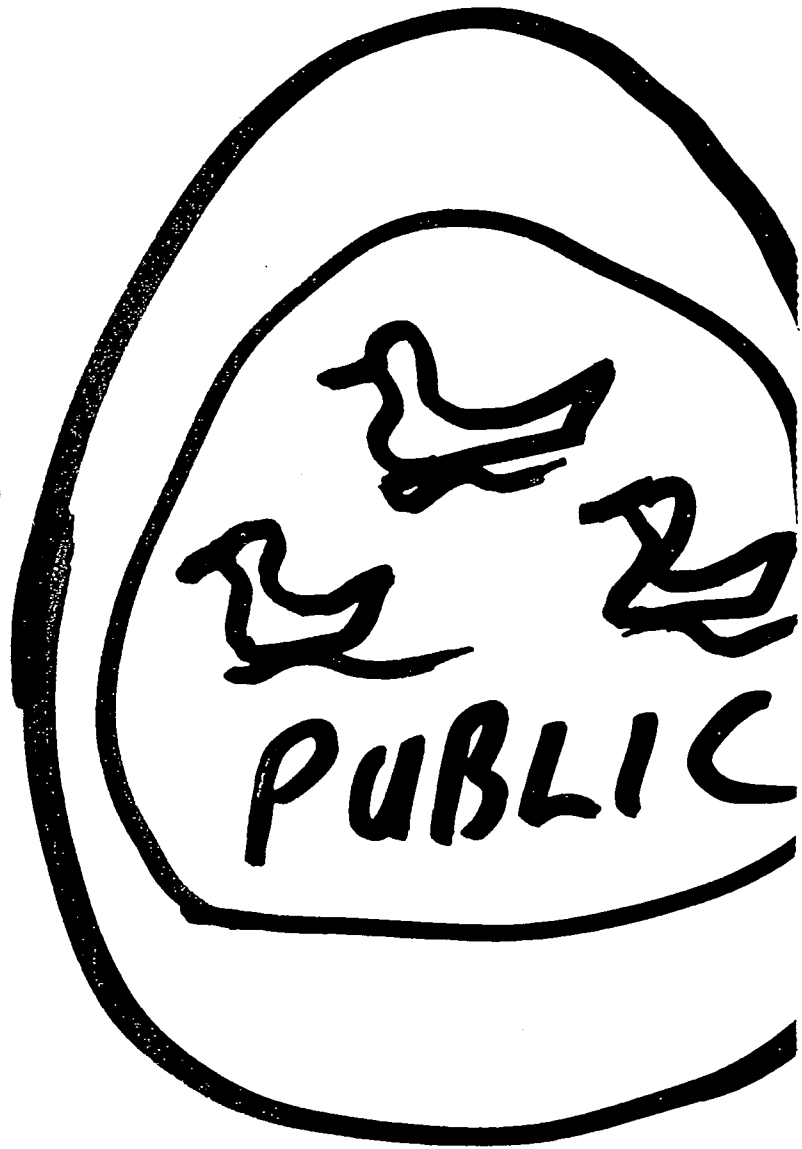


IMPORTANT.  
EMPATHETIC?



VILLAIN

**MOST  
IMPORTANT,  
FICKLE,**

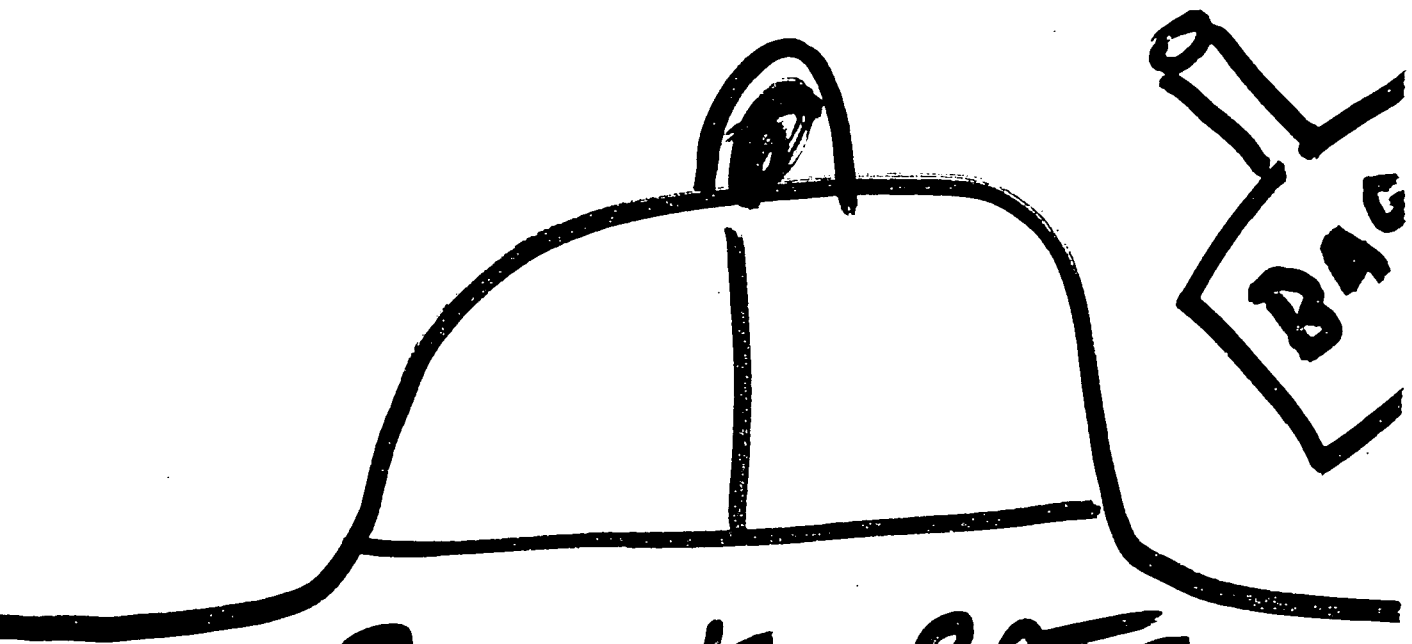


Another area of questions in the focus groups surrounded respondents' own views and perceptions on what they believed the police service looked like.

While the intention of these questions was to be a catalyst to a discussion on internally held images of their own organisation, a number of the focus groups interpreted the question as 'in the eyes of the public we look....'. There were indications that little or no thought had previously been given to the image of the organisation and only by further prompts was it possible to elicit the views of the respondents on their own image of the service.

The findings of the focus groups revealed that internally held images of the police service varied from department to department and only a small minority viewed the service as a corporate whole. The views held of each other's department (and not their own), reflected the disunity and disharmony commonly found throughout the fieldwork. For example: C.I.D. were seen as *'poseurs or beer swilling louts'*; Traffic Department as *'flash poseurs'*; and Headquarters as *'fat and workshy'*.

There was a strong consensus from the respondents in these images and attitudes that they revealed. These images were again evidenced by the sketches of beer bottles, smart suits, shining cars and officers in reclining seats drinking coffee. For examples of the illustrations and descriptions see overleaf:



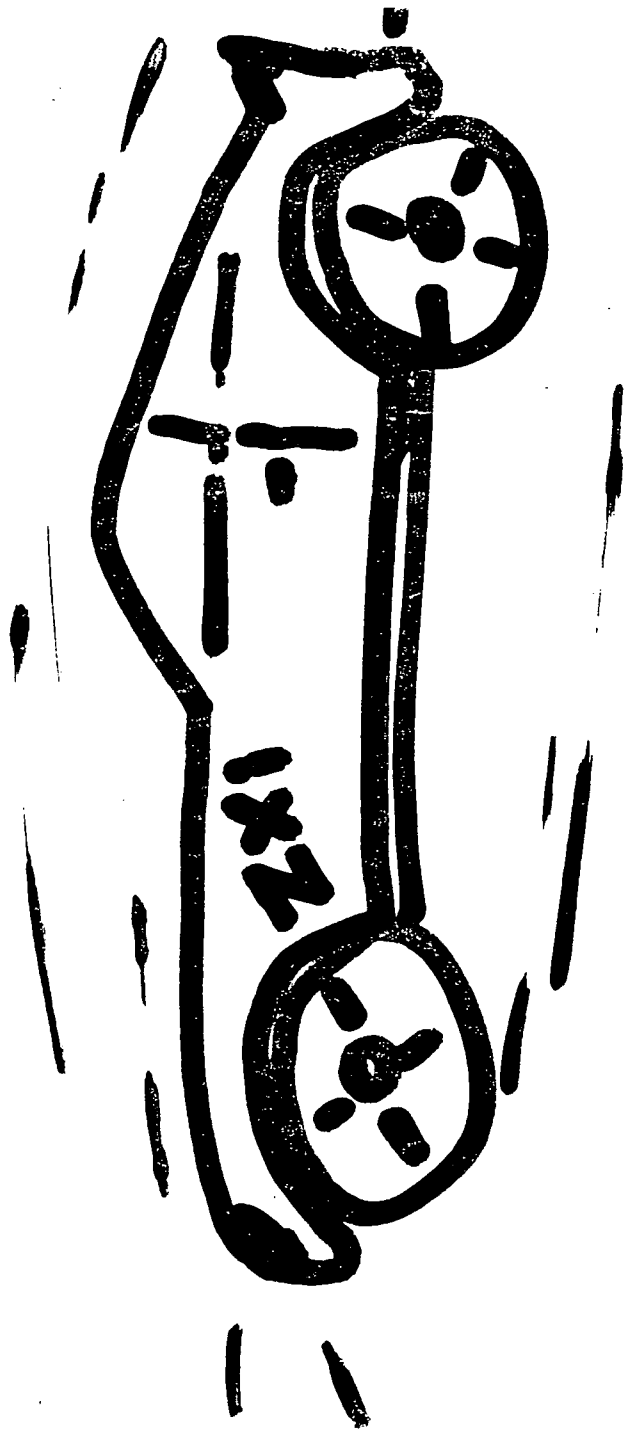
BLACK RATS



UNTRUSTWORTHY!

NEA KY.

TRIVIAL



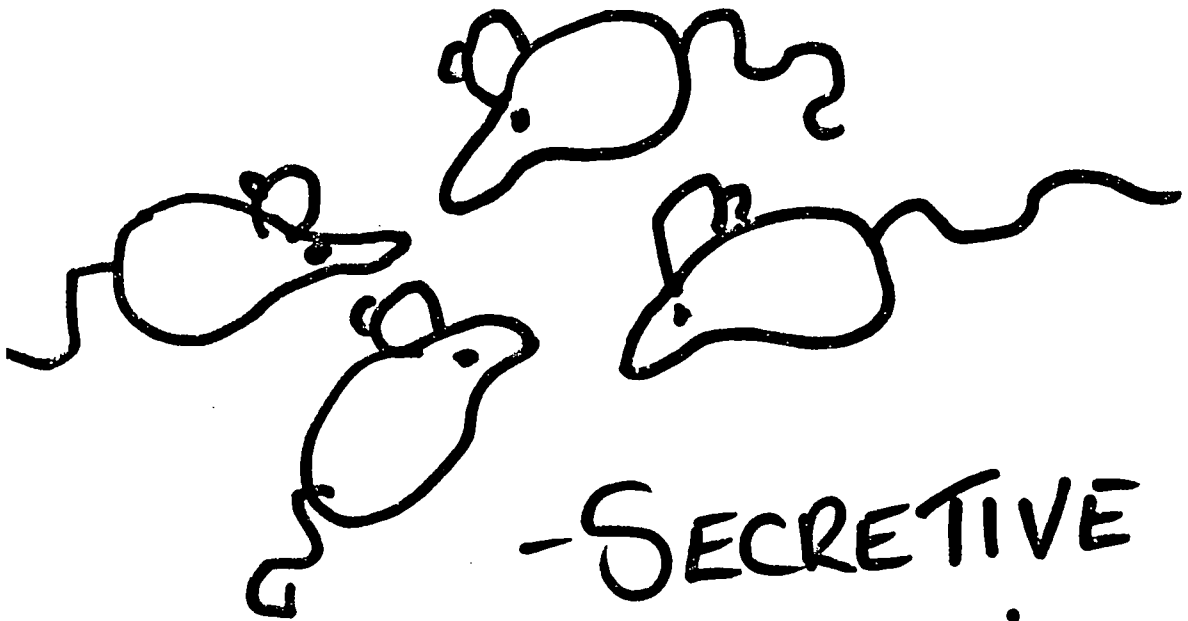
FLASH  
SUPERIOR



Electut.  
Noncumulative  
One-way

|  |              |  |
|--|--------------|--|
|  | <u>C.I.D</u> |  |
|  |              |  |
|  |              |  |
|  |              |  |
|  |              |  |
|  |              |  |
|  |              |  |

س.ا.د.



- SECRETIVE
- SELECTIVE
- WARY
- CONCEITED.

These images are, of course, also further reflections of the culture of the organisation which will be addressed in section 'o' of this chapter.

When probed about how the whole service was viewed by themselves, the respondents cited examples of how a lack of resources contributed to a lowering of standards but that overall the service was still *'smart and proud'*.

*".... We still provide a first class service against a backdrop of 'too much to do'...."*

*"....I'm still proud to be part of this service even with all its detractors and problems. Many other organisations would be proud of our achievements...."*

Recent negative publicity was also seen internally as having affected the image of the service with whole forces being labelled as 'culprits' in harming the police as an organisation:

*".... Yes we have got a few who bend the rules to achieve 'results'. All of these have been highlighted even exaggerated by the media - this has a bad effect on our image...."*

*"....I still think that most people have a good image of us despite the attempts by the press to blacken us...."*

The final area of questions under employee image in the focus groups concerned the respondents perceptions of how the public viewed the police in general and Durham Constabulary in particular.

While the majority of the public are perceived internally as being generally supportive of the police, many officers in the groups expressed the view that there has been a sea change of opinion. As in the responses to the last question, public commentators were held 'responsible' for this change with the public now believing that the police force is not a service at all, but an insular organisation who '*look after their own*'.

*"...I think the public view us as a mismanaged, authoritarian, aloof force. We do nothing to promote any different views. It is time someone hired a good PR team to negate some of the adverse publicity we receive...."*

*"...We, to the public, look like any other government funded body - threadbare. I still don't think we can complain about the state of our police stations because the local schools are just as bad.... "*

*"...Historically I think the Met. (Metropolitan Police) have done us no favours. They don't work like us and there just seems to be an unending list of cock ups and corruption which influence how the public see us...."*

*"....The public don't differentiate between 'the police' and 'Durham Police' - we are all the police. The only time I can remember when they perhaps noticed a difference was during the miners dispute when they knew the officers drafted in weren't locals...."*

Overall, the officers did think about themselves negatively in terms of image, in fact more so than national research has indicated to be the case. This will be analysed in Chapter Ten in the conclusions in terms of what impact this actually has on service delivery.

The extent to which these attitudes influence overt behaviour cannot be specified, but certainly inferences can be drawn - as they are in psychological studies, that attitude can be taken as an indicator of behaviour. (This will be expanded in the next section of this chapter dealing with a further component of corporate image - that of organisational culture.)

**n) *Summary of the findings on the influence of employees' image***

The respondents, generally, viewed the police service negatively in terms of the image they saw projected to the public. They did not see that there was any difference between other police forces and Durham other than the Metropolitan Police which was viewed most negatively. However, they did believe the service they offered was good, as they felt that they dealt with all the worst problems in society. The reason that respondents believed there is a mismatch between actual service delivered and the image of the

service is because of lack of understanding by members of the general public of policing demands and pressures.

Many officers showed sympathy with the general public's view that there were too few officers performing beat duty - to the detriment of the image projected of the service. Respondents felt beleaguered and overworked, as well as isolated because of the demands placed upon them.

There was also revealed much cynicism, and internal rivalry was prevalent, throughout many of the discussions. Senior management, particularly H.Q. staff, were subject of vehement criticism due to their perceived lack of contact with, and knowledge of operational policing. Most dissatisfaction and concern was expressed regarding how few officers actually performed '*coal face*' or operational duties i.e. working shifts on a police Sub-Division. Part of the responsibility for this, it was declared by respondents, was central government as well as the senior police officers nationally and locally.

These findings will be analysed in Chapter Eight.

***o) The influences of culture on corporate image***

Cultural influences were defined in Chapter Two, (p. 22 ante), as the taken for granted norms, values, rules and assumptions developed by the organisation and taught to or

the parameters of the law and the legal system, their relationship with the public is both complex and undefined. Policing styles vary from area to area but there are consistencies expressed by officers in terms of their priorities and concerns. These can strongly influence the image of their corporate image:

*"...If policing is only about enforcement then we cannot blame young officers for being totally enforcement oriented, authoritarian and arrogant ...."*

*M.J HIRST Chief Constable (1990) p. 13*

The culture of Durham Constabulary disclosed by the respondents of the focus groups strongly favours a crime priority and also significantly the role is seen as a reactive one as opposed to a preventative and proactive one. For example:

*"....What we really about is keeping the lid on crime. But sometimes you wonder because we deal with every type of call that comes in. It takes us away from what we should be doing...."*

*"....It's hard to keep them (police constables) motivated to do the routine stuff - its been the same ever since I joined. Minor complaints are seen as an unnecessary inconvenience but a report of intruders (persons in the act of committing crime) gets the adrenaline flowing...."*

The perception of officers was that everything about the organisation is geared to crime:

*"....We don't have meetings about how we are going to handle minor complaints - but every week we do about crime...."*

*"....Although the crime position I understand has to be given significance, it really is pushed from above regarding how we are doing with detection rates...."*

The effects of these findings of a crime orientation on corporate image will be analysed in Chapter Eight.

It was also found from the focus groups that there is more than sufficient workload on operational officers to fully occupy resources, with little time for planning or proactive policing:

*"....The calls just keep coming in and we have to respond. I try to have action plans for my shift but we never get the time or space to run them...."*

A further finding was that in the minds of officers what constitutes best practice in policing has not the same emphasis as the Home Office and senior management. Specifically, there is a mismatch views of performance measurement and the consultative philosophy of policing.



There is now in most forces, including Durham Constabulary, a four step plan to organising policing activity. It begins with the preparation of a mission or force policy statement which are some general guidelines about what the force intends to do. Next it involves a statement of goals, a more focused statement of the mission, and then this is followed by the specification of various objectives, derived from the goals. Finally come the action plans - specifications of what needs to be done including the formulation of performance indicators as a monitoring and evaluation device.

In Durham, for over five years, this methodology has been widely publicised, internally and externally by posters, newsletters and memorandum. The impact on the culture and working practices of officers appears to be minimal:

*"....All the bloody glossy posters in every station - what do they mean?  
They mean a bloody waste of money...."*

*"....There is a naïveté in our mission statement and objectives. We are limited in what we can achieve and they (the objectives) are not a solution to our problems - they have no effect on our work...."*

*"....Fancy words on fancy posters. Can you believe we've created a whole new department on the strength of them. A 'Quality Department' - what next - police work?...."*

Legislation and codes of practice do not determine or regulate the areas in which the police service chooses to operate, but do provide rules which are meant to be regulators of behaviour.

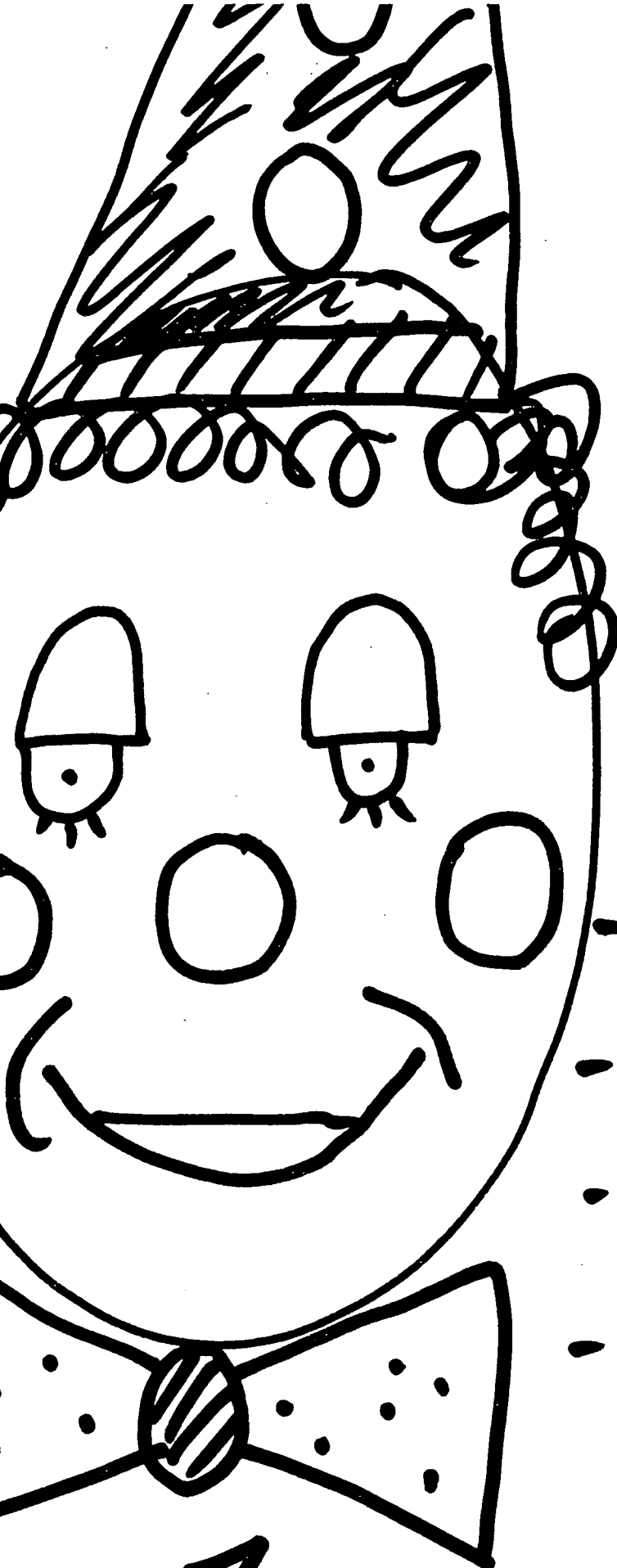
Focus group discussions revealed that bending the rules, bordering on and in some cases breaking the law, is still common practice and is both acknowledged and accepted by the organisation:

*"...We are not gangsters but everything is so much in favour of the criminal that if the rules weren't broken nothing would be detected..."*

*"...We're still 'at it' (breaking rules/law). Denying or delaying access to solicitors on dubious grounds. Allowing interviews or quick chats off tape. Unrecorded visits to the cell. I'm not suggesting that we fit anybody up - but we do breach PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act which governs police actions in respect of suspects) every day..."*

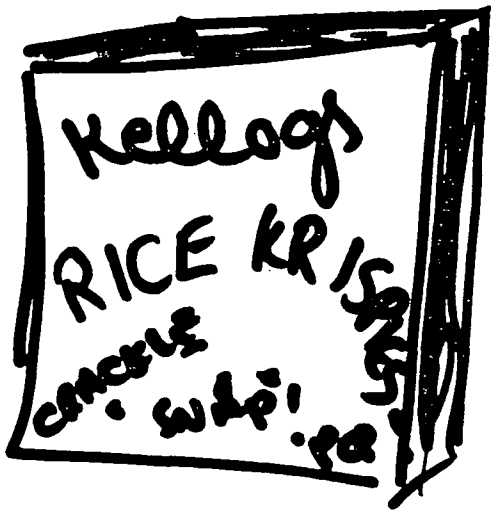
*"...You've got to do it (breach rules/law) or they (criminals) wouldn't go down (be convicted)..."*

Probationer constable respondents emphasised a service ethic rather than a one which has a crime emphasis. Moreover, the illustrations and descriptions of their working peers from the younger in service respondents were positive in the sense of being part of a team unit which was happy in its work, for examples see overleaf:

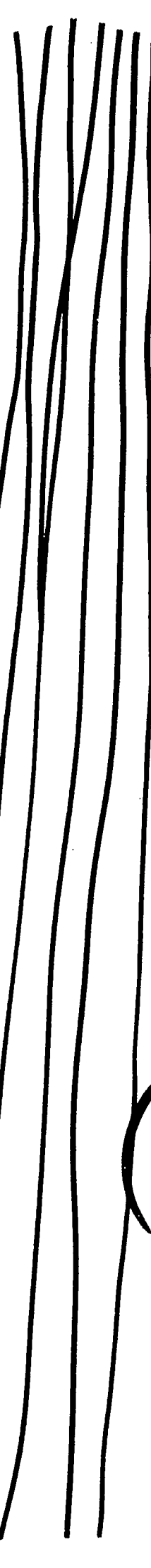


- FUNNY
- EASY GOING
- RELAXED
- HUMOUROUS

↑  
COMMUNICATE  
WELL



BUBBLY  
CONFIDENT  
CHEERFUL.



HAPPY. GO. LUCK  
BOISTEROUS  
FUNNY.

(SHIKY)

In marked contrast focus groups of older constables displayed a strong crime interest, other tasks were devalued as they provided minimal interest. For example:

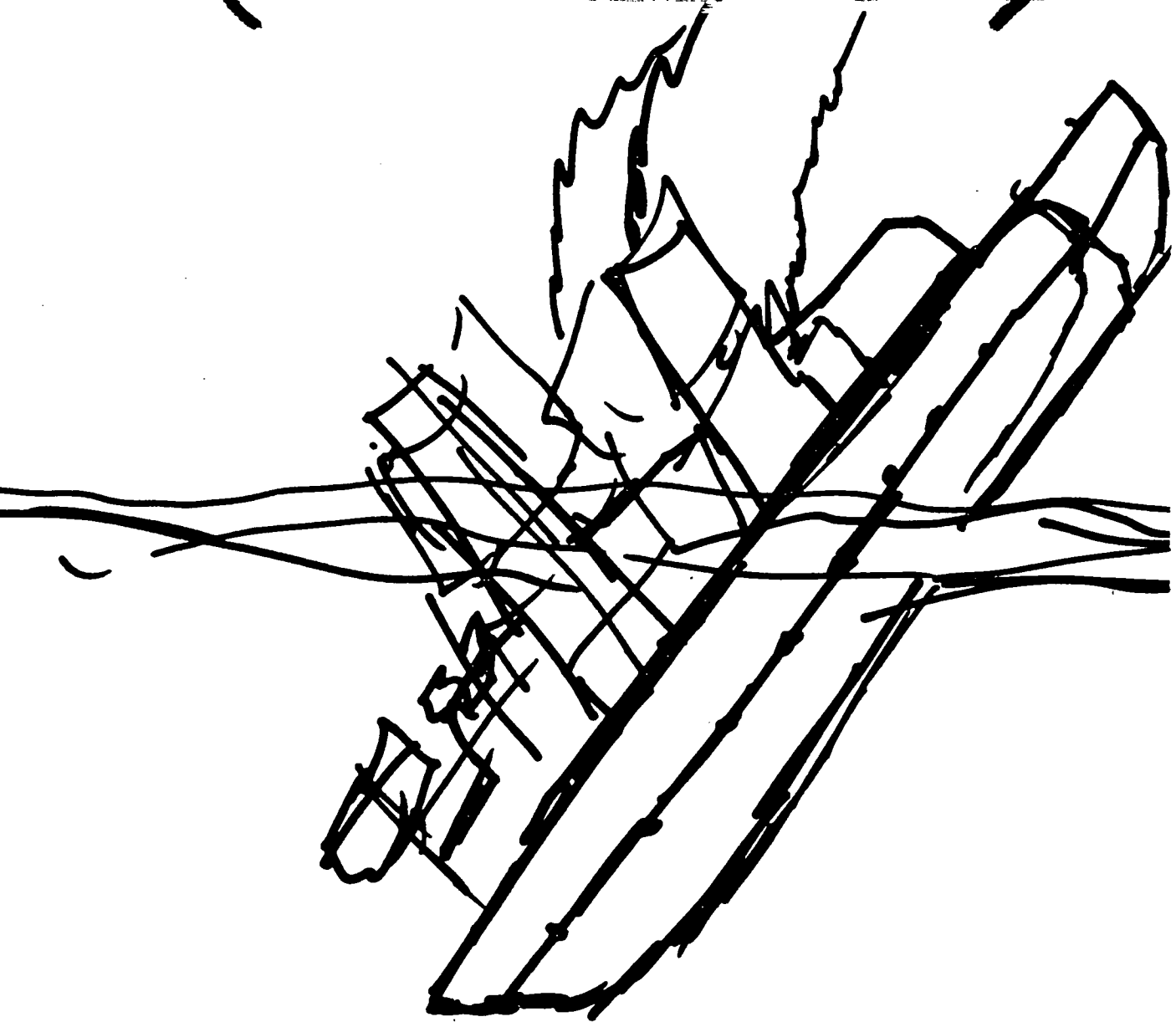
*"...When you get a result it means you've detected a crime. Its the reason we exist as an organisation...."*

*"...Yes we do lots of jobs - mostly ones that nobody else will pick up. If you check the incident log (a record of police incidents attended each day in each area) you'll see the variety of minor, mundane and repetitive jobs we do. Its what makes me so frustrated because I want to focus on crime - yet I'm sent to deal with a noisy dog...."*

Additionally the 'team' in terms of their shift or peer group was depicted in the images drawn by the respondents as being alone, sinking, frustrated and disillusioned, for example see overleaf:

# SINKING SHIP

(MORALE)



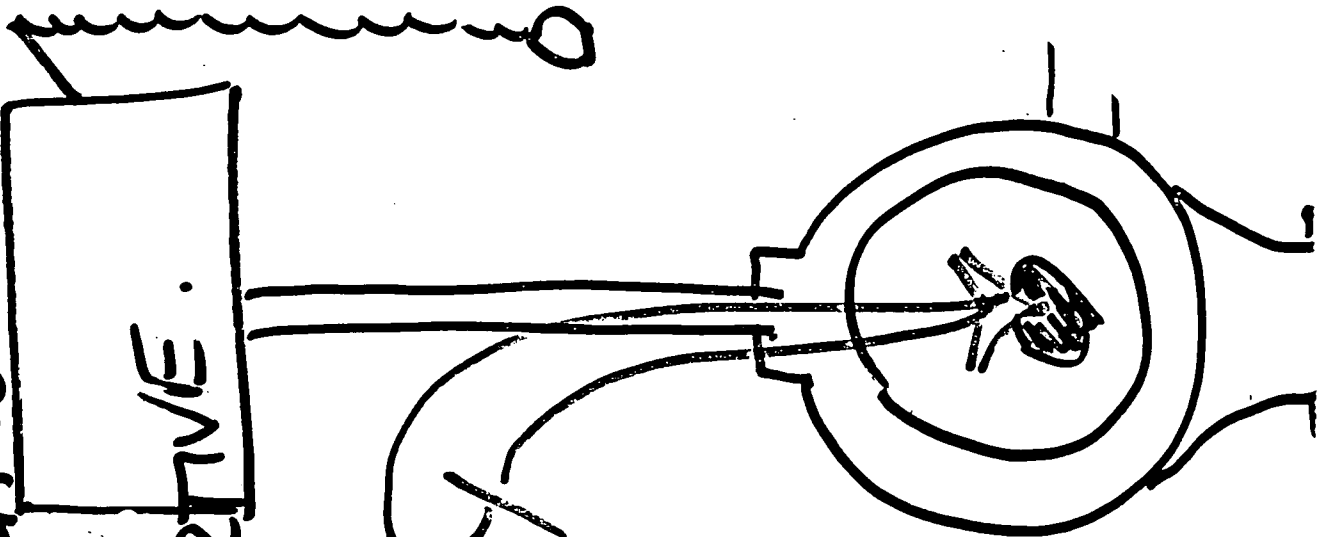
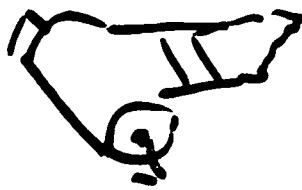


THE  
TOILET  
PAPER'S  
THE  
WRONG  
COLOUR!

FRUSTRATION.

UNSUPPORTIVE.

IN  
TRAY





The crime orientation is the largest single manifestation of a performance and results culture which is prevalent in Durham Constabulary. Respondents reflected a perceived need to improve policing performance by statistics:

*"...They say that we provide an all round service but month after month the measures they (management) use to see if we are doing our job is the crime statistics...."*

Performance cultures do not, of course, mean an improvement in the quality of service provided, but they do influence and guide methods of working. Formal meetings within the organisation, for example the 'morning conference' held in many Durham Constabulary Sub-Divisional offices hosted by the Commander where the previous twenty four hour policing incidents are discussed; briefing parades of shifts of officers as they commence duty; weekly crime reviews involving all personnel and social meetings, all feature crime as the number one topic on the agenda. This strongly influences the methods of policing and there is a resultant effect on the image of the service.

A further final aspect of the working culture revealed in the focus group discussions, which appears to impact on the image projected to the public because it affects working practices, is the structure and specialisation of the service.

The police organisation is structured both in a hierarchical and in a functional way. It can in essence be described as being structured in functions which specialise in only one part

of policing, for example, Drug Squad, Fraud Squad, Traffic, C.I.D., Dog Section, Communications, Training, and Uniform Operations.

Findings from the focus groups indicates that in Durham Constabulary this breeds insularity. Each function has its own specialised objectives which, logically, should increase performance. Unfortunately the data gathered suggests that the specialisation's are not all 'pulling in the same direction'. Furthermore, one section, department or squad actually inhibits performance of another in their attempt to maximise performance. For example:

*"....While we've got crime to fight they're (Traffic Department) swanning around doing speed checks. It makes us wonder what we're working our balls off for...."*

*"....You wouldn't think we were in the same job. There is mickey taking but there is a lot of back biting and back stabbing as well. It always strikes me as strange that H.Q. and Squads are always up to strength (full manpower) while we at the sharp end (operational) just keep losing men to them. Who has priority?...."*

**p) *Summary of the findings of cultural influences on corporate image***

The findings reveal that engendering a service ethic by the promotion of a philosophy and standards by senior management has little effect on Durham Constabulary working

practices. Policing is not policy driven. It does, however, attempt to measure performance. Unfortunately this has led to a focus on those aspects of policing which are capable of being measured statistically, in particular to a focus on crime.

The culture revealed in the focus groups was one of a beleaguered workforce struggling to meet the many and various demands made upon it. Respondents did not have a common sense of purpose of what the role of the organisation was.

Further findings showed that specialisation of departments appears to have had a detrimental effect in that officers are working separately and not towards a common goal. Additionally the shift workers on Sub-Division feel undervalued compared to their H.Q. and specialist colleagues.

The effect of the organisational culture on the behaviour of officers and hence the direct relationship with corporate image will be analysed in the next chapter, Chapter Eight.

**q) *Summary of the findings of the cultural perspective influences***

It has been shown, as with the design perspective on corporate image, in an examination of the cultural influences on image i.e. service, employee and cultural factors, that all are interrelated.

The service provided by the police organisation is very much demand led and determined. Some of the demands made by the general public on the service were seen

by the respondents as dealing with social problems and minor issues of public complaint. Many respondents wished for a clearer focus on their work and specifically a role which was narrowly defined to crime related matters. These views undoubtedly influence the service provided to those demands which do not sit within a narrow crime remit.

The employees own image of the service was again strongly influenced by the culture. Two factors were again much in evidence; the barriers created between the ranks due to the military hierarchy of structure and the compartmentalising of functions into specialist units which has created further barriers to communication. The respondents did not feel that the whole organisation had a common sense of purpose although, again they would wish a crime fighting orientation. Some working practices, those involving bending or breaking internal or legal rules, were seen as justified by many respondents in order that criminals were brought to justice. Recent court cases involving allegations of police corruption have shown how such working practices can also have a negative effect on the corporate image of the organisation.

The overall corporate culture of the organisation is seen as the prime determinant of the image projected by the organisation. How the culture affects the image will be analysed in the next chapter.

# **CHAPTER EIGHT**

## **Durham Constabulary corporate image: case analysis**

### **a) Introduction**

The previous chapter reported the findings of the research on Durham Constabulary corporate image from both design and cultural perspectives.

In an analysis of these findings in this chapter the significance of them in terms of the research questions posed for this thesis, (Chapter Five pp. 92-93 ante), as well as an evaluation of them in relation to other work in the area highlighted in the literature review of Chapters Three and Four, will be stated.

The framework for the chapter will follow that of the findings.

### **b) Public image influences**

This public image, held by individuals and groups with no direct experience of an organisation, is seen as an initial, generalised stereotype of the organisation.

As far as the police organisation is concerned:

*"....Whilst for the majority of the public with relatively low police contact the service provided is deemed to be 'good to very good', the experience of those in greater contact with the police suggests some dissatisfaction with the service on the grounds of policing style, service delivery or other poor, costly and avoidable behaviour by individual officers.... "*

*Operational Policing Review (1990) p. 18*

That was found to be the national picture but analysis of this research also shows it to be true of Durham Constabulary.

As has been pointed out by *Dowling (1986)*, corporate images are formed by factual and imaginary practices.

The limitations of the use of internal focus groups to research this component of overall corporate image is acknowledged. Nevertheless, sufficient national and local research did identify the influence of public image on the police. For example, in the police service in general, and Durham Constabulary in particular, surveys have indicated quite clearly that for more than 60% of the general public, attitudes and images held of the service are based upon factors other than experience of, or contact with, the police, (Chapter Seven p. 159 ante).

An analysis of how this stereotypical public image is affected once there is a direct contact with the policing service by a member of the public, reveals that the stereotype is

more positive than the one held by users of the service. A corporate image cannot be established merely by frequent advertising if the quality of the product or service does not sustain the advertising promises. Neither will a positive public image be sustained if contact with the product or service does not meet the expectation of the customer. Analysis of the findings of this research shows that there is a mismatch between public image projected and service delivery in the police organisation.

A further examination and analysis of the views of the Special Constabulary focus group, (Chapter Seven pp. 161-166 ante), discloses that the respondents view the police organisation as a corporate body which does not deal with the individuals within the service who fail to deliver the quality of service expected by the general public. There is a clear link diagnosed here between the culture of the organisation and the way the service is delivered by officers within it.

The issues pinpointed regarding the public image influences will not be simply resolved by increasing marketing or communication of the service if the service itself fails to deliver that which is expected. However, if the public image is unrealistic in terms of the actuality then there would be a role to play for a corporate image programme. Such a programme, in declaring 'who we are, what we do and how we do it' *Olins (1978)* would go some way to addressing the mismatch between expectation and reality.

c) *Environmental influences*

These influences on overall corporate image were found to be legislation, community policing and public order/industrial dispute issues, (Chapter Seven pp. 167 - 183 ante).

An analysis of the findings on legislation influences uncovers that legislation is viewed by respondents as a constraint and curb on policing activities - as well as placing the organisation into adversarial roles and positions with sections of the public.

On the first point regarding the constraint this contrasts sharply with the view of some external commentators who believe some legislation:

*"....Provides a cloak of legitimacy for their discretionary actions and policies, enabling them to intervene when and where they see fit - extraordinary powers for an autonomous and non accountable public agency...."*

*Uglow(1988) p. 87*

It was further discerned in the analysis that the public perceptions of the police service were negatively affected by the identification of the police with the whole English criminal justice system.

The second point regarding the adversarial issues of the policing role has also been cited by Uglow who states that the police have two images; an 'invading army' or as



'integrated in the community'. (The analysis of the findings on this point will be developed further later in this chapter under industrial disputes/public order influences.)

Community policing findings, (Chapter Seven pp. 174 - 176 ante), were analysed and it is shown that espoused policing philosophy, mission and policy are ideals which in policing practice do not occur.

For example, both nationally and locally 'quality of service' initiatives provide examples of the stated philosophy of the service:

*"....The process of a police force meeting community expectation is shown in a hierarchical model from mission to a wide range of policing activities. The quality of service concept can be seen to be an integral part of force strategic planning and organisation...."*

*A.C.P.O. (1991) p. 8*

*"....Durham Constabulary exists to provide a quality of policing service which is locally based and sensitive to community needs...."*

*Durham Mission Statement (1990)*

The analysis further distinguishes a crucial factor from both statements - which affects corporate image because of the practical policing policy which is generated from the

question - and that is who decides what 'meets community expectation' and 'individual community needs'.

It has become part of conventional wisdom to see 'community' policing as providing a coherent set of answers to policing problems. Community policing is a conveniently elastic term which is often loosely used to accommodate virtually any policing activity involving consultation with the public - although there is no agreed definition of what it is or what it ought to be.

The analysis of the findings on community policing pertinent to corporate image in Durham Constabulary is consistent with national research in this area.. The initiatives broadly termed community relations are more an exercise in imagery and rhetoric, or in public relations, than in building of a new partnership between police and the community. Nationally, similar evidence of this was also given to the Policy Studies Institute by several authors in 1987, notably Weatheritt, Shapland and Vagg, Morgan, Bright and Smith.

*Weatheritt*, of the Police Foundation, in a review of the experience of community policing to date, suggests that there is little or no sign that community initiatives have yet made any difference and concludes that:

*"...Whilst community policing ideas have been useful in stimulating debate and action, answers to policing problems cannot be found in*

*community policing philosophy nor in the practices to which it has given rise..."*

*Weatheritt (1987) p. 11*

The research by *Shapland and Vagg (1987)* was unique in looking at the informal policing carried out by residents and local business people, and at the relationship between that and the policing by the police. They show that the police view of the task is usually different from that of the local people, that in any event police officers in themselves vary in their perspectives depending on their position in the force, and that in general the characteristic police response does not blend at all easily with what people do by way of policing.

Analysis of the focus group findings identifies that the police view their task as different from the public or customers they serve. This is a further mismatch which can affect the corporate image of the organisation and the service it provides.

*Morgan (1987)* concluded that community consultative committees have not had much success in building the partnership between the police and the community, (Chapter Seven pp. 175- 177).

Morgan suggests various explanations for this failure: confusion and ignorance on the part of committee members, the lack of education to help them in their role, the negative response to the police and the committees - for understandable reasons - from certain elements in the community, and the reluctance of police forces - for equally

understandable reasons - to provide adequate information to the committees or to treat them as much more than a public relations forum.

**Bright's (1986)** main argument is that crime prevention should be led by local authorities rather than the police, should be supported by investment in infrastructure and social facilities as an alternative to more spending on the criminal justice system, and should draw heavily on local people's views about priorities and ideas for action. The Morgan report of 1990 has in fact led to national 'Safer Communities' projects being set up under the auspices of local authorities as advocated by Bright. (Many of the Safer Communities projects throughout the country are in the embryonic stage and therefore it is impossible to evaluate, at this stage, their effectiveness or otherwise in the field of crime prevention.) Bright also states that although the police have an important role to play, police contacts with the local community are limited and generally unproductive.

**Smith (1987)**, in his broader view of research to date, confirms that the accumulating evidence is that in practice the application of community policing ideas has made little difference or has not produced the intended results. He suggests that there are fundamental problems in trying to develop better relationships between the police and the community - problems that the enthusiasts for community policing have not yet faced.

**Uglow (1988 *op. cit.*)** believes, as far as the community image is concerned, that the image is one of:

*"...The unarmed friendly constable helping the aged, the young, and those in distress; the determined yet scrupulous pursuer of the offender; the natural protector of life and property, using a minimum of violence and intelligent crime prevention techniques in the public interest. All of these are the dominant images of our time..."* Uglow p. 73

Uglow states these types of images are the 'language of persuasion' - persuasion that the police service is not imposed on society but forms a natural part of it - and that whether or not the imagery and style is paramilitary or community it is nevertheless imposed authority.

The analysis of the focus groups respondents reveals that internally the officers do not view positively their apparent authoritarian role. However, there was evidence of a dichotomy here. On the one hand officers held distinct negative attitudes towards, and stereotyped the behaviour within, certain communities or sections of the community, (Chapter Seven pp. 177-178 ante). This, it was stated, led to a '*stronger, firmer, authoritarian*' style of policing these communities which they were apparently happy to adopt.

On the other hand officers wanted to be distanced, both as individuals and as an organisation, from the strong, firm and authoritarian role that they played in certain industrial disputes, (Chapter Seven pp. 177-180 ante). The situation then, regarding in

particular the miners' dispute of 1984, and the legacy now, has been a negative effect on police corporate image.

Evidence of the effect of 'pressure' or civil liberties groups on police corporate image was also reported in the findings, (Chapter Seven pp. 180-181 ante). Analysis shows that this trend of respondents to be hypersensitive to criticism of any nature, but particularly from outside sources or agencies, influences the officers' objectivity and impartiality and reinforces their defensiveness and insularity. This too means that an accurate image of the service and its role and function is either under reported or inaccurately reported. This leads to the following influence on corporate image of communication which will be analysed in the next section of this chapter.

*d) Communication influences*

The findings on communication influences on corporate image were categorised into both external and internal communication, (Chapter Seven pp. 183 ante).

Analysis of the policing policies of Durham Constabulary with regard to external media relations revealed once again that the policy did not match the practice. For example:

*"....Supervisory officers, Sergeants and above may authorise the release of information to the media. However, this does not preclude constables,*

*who have been briefed by a supervisor from releasing information...."*

*Durham Constabulary Orders 1995*

While major incidents, serious crime, force policy and discipline matters are co-ordinated by the Headquarters Press Office, at Sub-Divisional level, there was actually found to be no co-ordination and the response to the media is defensive and hostile, (Chapter Seven pp. 185-187 ante). Analysis shows that officers complain of unfair media reporting but, nevertheless, generally refuse to engage in open communication with media representatives in order to offer more balance news coverage.

Nowhere is the sense of balance more critical than in the local media. It is the local papers, radio and television which publish news of local accidents, crime court cases, consultative committees, and local police promotions and transfers - details which make local residents more conscious of the role and function played by the police in the community.

Analysis further identifies that Durham Constabulary personnel fail to realise the contribution that intelligent police/media relations can make to supporting general policies. Local press and national media will respond positively to approaches featuring police work, initiatives and achievements. Little, if any, such approaches were found to be made at Sub-Divisional level.

Additionally, there was revealed a mistaken idea that the chief function of press or media relations is to obtain favourable mentions in the media. It is not; any more than the function of community relations is to achieve a favourable image. Its true object is to create knowledge and understanding, even of the unfavourable.

A conclusion drawn by the authors of the 1992 Durham Constabulary survey on public attitudes towards the police service provided, was that the force was failing to market itself in terms of communicating with the public their initiatives, objectives and successes:

*"....The force needs to address the communication/marketing problems that exist, if it is to enhance its position within the community...."*

*Gorton Services(1992) p. 15*

This would go some way to close the gap between expectation of policing service and delivery of policing service. However, unlike organisations from the profit sector, a public, non-profit organisation like the police service does little, if any, paid for promotional work or advertising in the media. This should serve to emphasise or reinforce that a proactive stance to media relations is a necessity to improve the service's corporate image.

The analysis of the findings on internal communication also shows that barriers exist to interactive, open and frank information exchange within the police organisation.



*Elion (1968)*, argues that high levels of communication increase co-ordination within organisations, which in turn enhances organisational effectiveness. Furthermore, rather than directly influencing behaviour, internal communications may affect the way receivers organise their images of their environment, and thus influence the way they behave, *Roberts (1971)*. Elsewhere, *Hawkins and Penley (1978)* have proposed a model that suggests that internal communication affects motivation, which in turn influences employee performance.

Moreover, conventional employee communication in organisations does emphasise and assume that all employees want or need is information:

*"....treats employees as all the same; tells and expects compliance; assumes that all employees want is information and emphasises channels and vehicles of communication, not the process...."*

*Gudjonsson (1989) p. 3*

Analysis of the focus group findings, (Chapter Seven pp. 188-192 ante), demonstrates this type or style of top down communication in Durham Constabulary. It is a broadcast system very much based on the philosophy outlined by Gudjonsson above. Supervisors and managers appeared to have an excessive requirement for information and as a result a number of laborious systems have been developed to feed this need.

The corporate image perspective of internal communication mirrors several approaches to internal marketing. For example *Gronroos (1978, 1985)* - who associates internal marketing with facilitating improvements in service quality; *Flipo (1986)* who advocates internal marketing must be aligned with external marketing to ensure success; *Berry's (1981)* and *Gummerson's (1987)* concept of internal customer and quality management; and *Piercy and Morgan (1990)* who see internal marketing as a means of effecting organisational change.

In the research previously quoted, (Chapter Four pp. 58-64 ante), on the design perspective of corporate image carried out at I.C.I., it was found that employees gained information about their own company as follows: grapevine 63%; company newspaper 19%; notice board 7%; local management 3%; senior management 1%. However, when asked what the preferred source of information regarding the company would be, the 'listing' was almost a complete opposite with over 80% wanting communication from local and senior management.

In 'selling' a message or policy to internal customers the 'packaging' of the communication is all important. If the internal target market feel they are being patronised, or the language is not that of the internal customer, these communications will have been wasted. Analysis of the findings from the focus groups identifies that this is a particular problem within Durham Constabulary. The effect of this is that the workforce are isolated from the most senior managers and the policies of the senior managers are neither effectively communicated nor acted upon. Further examination of

the images from the focus groups depicting senior managers, (Chapter Seven pp. 190-192 ante), illustrates the isolation and distance, as well as the ineffective communication, of them. Examples of the descriptive words used by respondents, '*aloof, dictatorial, autocratic*', emphasise the impact of their views.

All of the differing perspectives of internal communication also emphasise the need for lateral and upward communication as well as top down communication. In Durham Constabulary this is particularly affected by two factors: the hierarchical nature of the organisation and the specialist departments within the organisation. Analysis of the images produced by respondents during the focus groups, (Chapter Seven pp. 197-202 ante), reveals the sharp distinction between, and barriers to communication within, differing sections and departments of Durham Constabulary.

The effects of both of these divisions in the police service in general has, to some extent, been previously identified by *Olins (1988)* in the report on the Metropolitan Police:

*"....The tools which the organisation uses to communicate internally are inadequate... forms of staff communication, cascading and so on, are so far ineffective.... Lack of clarity about mission and purpose is exacerbated by internal division. There is of course, inter divisional rivalry in most big organisations but we think it is especially prevalent in the Metropolitan Police...."*

*p. 15*

The strength of the rivalry and the compartmentalisation that was apparent in Durham Constabulary shows that in a much smaller organisation (1400 officers compared to 28000 officers in the Metropolitan Police) very similar divisions exist to those revealed by Olins.

The effect of the working practices of some of the departments, particularly traffic officers, was seen by respondents as being especially harmful to the corporate image of Durham Constabulary. This is typified by the descriptive words used, for example '*pernicious sly and hypocritical*', as well as by the drawings and images of colleagues. From these communication influences the actual effect of service delivery on corporate image is given in the next section.

e) *The influences of service on corporate image*

This was defined in the model from Chapter Two, (p. 21 ante), as the 'evaluated' image of the organisation held by those with previous service contact or usage of the police. In the case of the police service, both locally in Durham and nationally, a central question raised concerns what is the policing service expected by the general public and provided by the organisation. However, in order to address the question it is necessary to analyse the findings on what the current policing service delivery actually is.

In 1983 a report on Community and Race Relations training for the Police Training Council made various recommendations including that '*detailed and objective*

*observational studies*' of actual police contact with the public needed to be carried out, so that appropriate skills could be identified for training purposes. A Research and Planning Unit project in 1986 addressed this proposal by gathering data on police-public encounters. Observational methods were used by a team of fieldworkers who accompanied uniform patrol officers in three different forces. The conclusions of the report note that:

*"....Although in the vast majority of cases encounters proceed in a polite and friendly manner, there are a few examples of very bad practice and a great many more where there is room for improvement...."*

*Home Office Research Study (1986) p. 12*

Moreover, this Home Office research found that 'procedural and organisational' constraints were often so dominant that they received much more attention from the constable than questions of public relations, and there were various ways in which such factors affected the police officers' behaviour.

Following the above research projects, the Police Training Council authorised a radical change in police recruit training which commenced in 1988. The philosophy and ethos of the new training was an attempt to address the personal as well as professional development of recruits by confronting the attitudes, values and beliefs of officers through a process of experiential learning and reflective practice. Analysis of the findings of the focus groups, (Chapter Seven pp. 207-211 ante), shows that the new system of

training has had little, if any, impact on improving the police service in terms of how individual officers interact with the public.

Furthermore, the analysis also reveals that officers acknowledge shortcomings in service delivery which influences the corporate image of the organisation. For example, much concern was expressed regarding the limitations on police/public contact due to constraints of time caused by workload, (Chapter Seven pp. 211-214 ante). This analysis then reflects the national picture uncovered by the Home Office research some eight years previously where development or improvement would have been expected. However, the situation has remained unchanged.

The *Operational Policing Review (1990, op. cit.)* also raised the issue of quality of police service delivery - which was then researched nationally by a 'Quality of Service Subcommittee' of the Association of Chief Police Officers. They identified five key operational service areas and drew up a model of service delivery standards, together with examples of how to achieve and monitor them.

No evidence was found in an analysis of the findings from the focus groups that these national service delivery standards were either known about or acted upon. The only local, Durham, quality standards known to the respondents were leaflets and posters issued by an internal Quality Assurance Department. These were viewed negatively and had no influence on operational behaviour, (Chapter Seven p. 250 ante).

Durham Constabulary quality of service initiatives, adopting the same theme as the national review that policing quality needs to be part of a service culture, have included: a management programme named "Aiming for Excellence"; corporate strategy and mission statements; public attitude surveys; and the issue of the above mentioned leaflets and posters to employees aimed at improving service standards. Also throughout 1993, in line with government policy each police force issued a 'Policing Charter' - Durham Constabulary launched theirs in February 1993 - defining minimum service standards. Although it is not within the remit of this work to evaluate these national and local strategies and initiatives aimed at improving service delivery, the findings and analysis reveal again that they have little, if any impact on operational officers.

Many studies of police-public contact, (Chapter Six p. 128 ante), make it clear that the public do not limit their demands to matters falling within the criminal law or, indeed, the law as a whole. The role of the police service is not in fact a narrow one.

However, analysis of the findings of the focus groups discloses that many police officers do try to make the role narrow, favouring a law enforcement approach, (Chapter Seven pp. 248-258 ante). This tends to devalue the social service element of policing and also means that the emphasis given by officers is to those policing situations which lead to conflict with the public. Many respondents indicated that they felt they dealt with, in their view unnecessarily, a variety of minor, mundane tasks simply because the police service has historically always provided assistance to the public. These tasks, while time consuming, do in fact allow contact with the general public in non adversarial situations.

The service element of the police service could therefore be emphasised in these circumstances.

Additionally, respondents highlighted the need for the general public to place into context the various demands and their effects have on police service delivery, (Chapter Seven pp. 244-245 ante). It was the opinion of respondents that the general public hold a naïve view of the function of the police and that the public are unaware of both the number and the diversity of tasks that police officers perform.

Analysis of these specific findings goes some way to explain the results of an external survey on Durham Constabulary service delivery, (Chapter Seven pp. 207-208 ante) which noted, in general, that although there was a high level of satisfaction with the service, questions were raised about officers showing a '*disinterest*' in their contact with the public.

This external survey also confirmed earlier national work by *Hough and Mayhew (1983; 1985)* that the main reasons why the public are dissatisfied with the service is that the police show a lack of interest and fail to keep people informed after contact with the service. *McConville and Shepherd (1992)* found that some officers appeared to have an inability to chat to members of the public and did not radiate confidence. These authors offer the view that as encounters between the police and the public are infrequent and short-lived, the manner and attitude of an officer can quickly generate a favourable or unfavourable image of the police in general.



Some explanations of these national findings - as to why there is a perception of disinterest conveyed by officers - can be found by analysis of the views of the Durham Constabulary group respondents. Competing demands on time, including dealing with the '*minor and trivial*', coupled with a lack of resources and public understanding, contribute towards an '*incident led*' service. By this it is meant that every incident reported to the police has to be actioned and a sequel generated. Sheer volume of incidents, ranging from crime to neighbourly disputes or from cruelty to animals to found property, affect the service delivery.

Nationally, officers surveyed during the *Operational Policing Review (1990 op. cit.)* to ascertain what factors they believed affected quality of service to the public, did not mention the quality of personal contact in service delivery. Suggestions proposed by officers related mostly to improvement in the public perception of the quality of service provided, rather than to improving the service itself.

The research here involving the focus groups found this not to be the case. In complete contrast to the earlier national research, an analysis of the focus groups reveals respondents were well aware of the need to improve the service *and* the perception of the service through increased communication. There was found to be little, if any, complacency, (Chapter Seven pp. 208-209 ante).

Another area reported in the findings, (Chapter Seven pp. 214-217 ante), where significant impact can be made on either service delivery or the perception of service delivery to the public is the police station enquiry office.

*Olins (1988)* found in the Metropolitan Police that:

*"....The physical state of many police stations is run down. Public areas such as receptions, waiting rooms and so on, look neglected.....all of this contributes to an atmosphere of shabby confusion...." Olins 1988 p. 13*

In 1992 commenting on the condition of police stations, the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee stated:

*"....We are concerned over the scale and nature of the acknowledged deficiencies in the police estate and their adverse effects on efficiency and effectiveness...." Hansard (1992)*

It was found in the analysis of the findings both from observations and the views of respondents, (Chapter Seven p. 215 ante), that the above reported national situation with regard to the image projected by police buildings remains the same. Furthermore, many from the focus groups indicated how the physical appearance and condition of the working environment influenced the way they work. The cumulative effect of appearance and, through the working environment the effect on working behaviour,

considerably affects the corporate image projected by the organisation.

This has been recognised by the Metropolitan Police, who developed '*The Plus Programme*' from the earlier corporate image report by *Olins (1988 op. cit.)*, which, in the words of the Police Commissioner, is about 'action not words and is not just about image'. The philosophy was stated thus:

*"...Our service to the public is provided mostly at a local level. The first impression the public have is usually of the officer on patrol or visiting their homes or on the telephone or at the front desk at the police station. The lasting impression of us - of what we say or do or write - is formed by encounters with individual officers and civil staff...."*

*Sir Peter Imbert The Plus Programme (1990) p. 2*

Some of the issues raised by the analysis of the findings are clearly only capable of being addressed if additional finance is made available. But there is finance available for certain projects. For example, respondents questioned why priority had been given to 'buying in' to a consortium for the use of a police helicopter, or to the buying of word processors and personal computers for police staff who were untrained in their use. The question which was asked by respondents is who decides the priority as to where the resources are allocated - as the priorities decided appear to have little significance to the operational officer.

The analysis of the findings on service influences on corporate image has shown that respondents themselves view the police service negatively in terms of the image they see it projecting to the public. Caution should be exercised to avoid making the claim that this analysis of verbally expressed attitudes significantly effects their overt behaviour. The attitudes towards their own organisation may not be directly translated into actions. However, respondents were critical of their own service delivery.

The analysis highlights the central dilemma for police officers, which is that a differing policing style has to be adopted for differing policing functions. One is a 'harder' style for enforcement situations and the other 'softer' approach for social service functions. Without a clearer understanding of the focus of the role of a police officer this dilemma will remain - and undoubtedly has implications for the variety of images which are projected by the organisation.

Moreover, while acknowledgement was made by respondents regarding the weaknesses in service delivery, the overall view was that the organisational constraints of resources not matching service demand had led to a negative perception of the service by the general public. This situation, it was stated, could be improved by better external communication which may help contextualise the whole policing service to the community it serves.

Furthermore, the image projected to the general public by police buildings and enquiry officers, analysis shows does little to reflect a positive impression of the service.

*f) The influences of employees image of their own organisation*

This has previously been defined, (Chapter Two p. 22 ante), as the way employees see their own organisation, the morale of the employees and their perceptions of the organisations policies - but only as an employee, not as a user of the service.

*Kennedy (1977 op. cit.)*, noted that, when image profiling, companies concentrate their efforts on recording what it is the general public think of the organisation. Although some reference is made to the fact that company employees may form one of the publics for corporate image, many do not see the employee as forming part of the image formation process. However, when image profiling was carried out by Kennedy in engineering companies, the extent to which employees and external groups held the same, or very similar, views of the company was considerable:

*"...The contention that the views of the employees will be reflected among those having contact with them is strongly supported...."*

*Kennedy (1977) p. 23*

In analysing the views of the respondents of the focus groups there was a marked tendency for the respondents to view the image of the police service, both internally and externally, negatively, (Chapter Seven pp. 244-246 ante). The negative images held of the organisation by those within it may be communicated externally.

Internal images of the organisation held by employees are considered an important facet of the formation of an overall corporate image of the police service and have been acknowledged by many image theorists, notably *Dowling (1986) and Kennedy (1977)* as influential in the forming of a corporate image.

Again analysis discloses that respondents consistently and intensely described a stressed, overworked, under resourced organisation. The vehemence of the negative comment about the struggle to maintain what in essence was seen as a skeleton police service was directed in the main towards central government and the most senior police managers, (Chapter Seven pp. 224-235 ante). The effect of both the perception held by officers and the impact on the way the service is delivered is an adverse one in terms of image.

There was strong evidence from the focus groups that the police service is a divided organisation, (Chapter Seven pp. 239-243 ante). This is because of both the hierarchical nature of the organisation and also because of the rivalry between specialist groups and departments. Senior management are seen by operational officers as being totally out of touch with reality; and internal rivalries were illustrated and described emphasising insularity and hostility. These images and descriptions of both senior management and colleagues are, of course, also indicators of culture and they will be explored and analysed in section 'g' of this chapter.

Analysis of the images drawn of their own organisation by respondents reflect a hardened, embittered and embattled attitude, (Chapter Seven pp. 235-238 ante). Policies

of community policing and philosophies espousing compassion, courtesy and patience were met with derision. Whether these attitudes strongly influence overt behaviour cannot be specified, but certainly inferences can be drawn - as they are in psychological studies, that attitudes at the very least are influencers of behaviour.

Finally, the respondents emphasised that the public had only a limited, distorted, media view of the police service, (Chapter Seven pp. 245-246 ante). Analysis shows that this leads to further insularity on behalf of members of the police organisation. In being '*misunderstood*' a strategy has been adopted to close ranks and not to communicate fully externally. This has the effect of further limiting the knowledge of the general public about the police service and could be harmful to the corporate image of the organisation. In the words of Mark Twain '*if you have a story to tell, it is no good whispering down a well*'.

Respondents, the employees of Durham Constabulary in day to day contact with the general public, held a very negative view of their own organisation.

The reasons for the negative image of the organisation concerned were threefold: too few officers to provide a quality service; widespread distrust and animosity both towards the most senior managers of the service and the government; and the fact that community policing philosophies did not equate to the focus of actual police work which they believed should be aimed at the criminal elements within society.

Lack of communication with the general public has led to the public stereotyping the police service - the stereotype having a negative effect on image because it is a limited and distorted view. The apparent lack of communication and understanding between the police and the general public has also led to increased insularity within the police organisation which again affects the corporate image of the organisation.

**g) *The influences of culture***

These influences were defined in Chapter Two, (p. 22 ante), as the taken for granted norms, values, rules and assumptions developed by the organisation and taught to or learned by new employees as a valid way to perceive the organisation.

The expectations of the police, particularly in the last thirty to forty years, have been of a crime fighting organisation with success being viewed as the ability of the service to affect crime rates. This was, until relatively recently, also promulgated by the police organisation itself in an effort to gain extra resources including personnel. Yet most research indicates that the vast majority of police work has little to do with crime but more to do with social functions - *Punch and Naylor (1973)*, *Comrie and Kings (1974)*, *McCabe and Sutcliffe (1978)*, *Hough (1980)*, *Eklom and Heal (1982)*, *McConville and Shepherd (1992)*. Nevertheless, this research shows that the culture of the organisation holds a narrow focus on its priorities, and that focus has a crime orientation.



There is considerable scope within the broadly defined remit of the police service to focus on issues of their own choosing. This historically has been termed discretionary activity or the exercise of discretion. Recently the policy of 'returning officers to the beat', has found widespread acceptance among the public. However, analysis of the findings of the focus groups reveals that the culture of Durham Constabulary strongly favours a crime priority and also, significantly, the role is seen as a reactive one as opposed to a preventative and proactive one, (Chapter Seven pp. 248-249 ante).

Foot or beat patrol does not sit comfortably within this identified culture. Other research has shown that there is little evidence that increasing the number or frequency of foot patrols actually reduces crime, *Bright (1969)*, *Schnelle et al (1975)*, *Heller (1977)*, *Carr-Hill and Stern (1979)*, *The Police Foundation (1981)*, *Greenberg et al 1983)*, *Graef (1990)*, although this may achieve other important objectives in terms of public satisfaction and feelings of reassurance which could enhance the image of the service.

No significant questions appear to have been asked of the public about what tasks officers on the beat should be carrying out, and even if these tasks were clearly identified by the public and management of the service, what tasks would actually be carried out in the prevailing culture?

As stated findings of the focus groups identified that the culture of a crime priority is still paramount with officers reflecting their perceptions of what the management focus is i.e. crime, (Chapter Seven pp. 258-259 ante). However, further analysis reveals that this may

be a mis-perception. There is undoubtedly a crime orientation at Sub Divisional Manager level but most senior manager and executive officers espouse a different philosophy and focus - that of a total service orientation. Those respondents who did recognise this difference between managers simply regarded it as a further indication that the most senior managers were out of step with reality and the policies were discussed with rancour.

Some national findings of a broadly similar nature were identified in research by *Graef (1990)*:

*"...Current doubts about the real value of beat policing are easily read by all ranks which undermines force policy as it passes down the line. The beat job is seen as 'only' keeping the peace, a relatively meaningless task, while responding to calls in a car is 'enforcing the law', a much more glamorous one..."* p. 27

There is little doubt that there is a conflict in the culture of the police organisation between upholding the law and providing a public service, *Reiner (1978)*, *Jones (1983)*, *Grimshaw and Jefferson (1987)*, *McConville and Shepherd (1992)*. What is additionally revealed in an analysis of the findings of the focus groups is that there is a mismatch between the views of the Home Office and senior police management and the views of operational police officers, (Chapter Seven pp. 234 ante).

The most extensive working study of the police, the *Policy Studies Institute Report (1983)* made the distinction between several different forms of rules which guide police officers actions. '*Working rules*' are the ones internalised by police officers and guide their actions; '*inhibiting rules*' are external ones which are taken into account because they are likely to be enforced; and '*presentational rules*' which put an acceptable gloss on actions governed by working rules. The report also makes the point that many police officers believe that their job cannot be done effectively within these rules. In *Reiners' (1985)* research he too states:

*"...What needs to be more precisely explored is the relationship between formal rules of law and procedure and the cultural rules which are the guiding principles of police conduct..."* *p. 59*

Analysis of the focus groups reveals that the formal rules of law and procedure provide only a framework to, at best, guide police officers' actions. The culture of the organisation to a much larger extent regulates these actions. Evidence was found that the cultural norms even extend to breaking the law, (Chapter Seven p. 251 ante). While this could never be seen to be condoned by the organisation there does appear to be a passive acceptance of it which serves to reinforce the culture.

*Reiner (1985 op. cit.)* also argues that the characteristics of police officers are relatively fixed across the western world and that one such characteristic is that they see themselves as knights in white armour fighting an evil adversary. The effects of this

working culture have been highlighted by the most senior officers in the country:

*"...The working culture of the police service is shot through with corner cutting and expediency..."*

*Woodcock (Her Majesties Inspector of Constabulary 1992)*

These practices, which are in the main practices to apprehend offenders, have been termed 'noble cause corruption' and reflect a desire by officers to see that 'justice is done'. When such practices are exposed as illegal as in recent criminal trials in Birmingham and London there is an adverse effect on the corporate image of the police service as a whole. Nevertheless, analysis of the findings of the focus groups reveals that locally in Durham Constabulary such practices remain, with the obvious danger of exposure and harmful effect on corporate image.

This primacy for crime, and crime results, places a focus on this area of policing which belies its importance in the eyes of the general public who are the customer, *Holdaway (1983), Policy Studies Institute (1983), McConville and Shepherd (1992)*.

Engendering a service ethic by the promotion of a philosophy and standards by senior management this research has shown has little effect on police working practices. Policing, specifically that within Durham Constabulary, is not policy driven. It does however attempt to measure performance. Unfortunately, this had led to a focus on

those aspects of policing which are capable of being measured statistically, in particular to a focus on crime.

The focus on crime is not, however, that which is espoused by the most senior management in the organisation. The crime orientation is particularly noticeable at operational level - to the detriment of those social service functions of the police which could engender public goodwill and enhanced corporate image.

The crime orientation of those officers most in contact with the public, and the perception of officers that the criminal justice system is weighted heavily to the advantage of the criminal, has led to working practices which stretch the limits of the law and the spirit of the law. Some nationally exposed practices of this nature which have led to miscarriages of justice have already had a negative effect on the corporate image of the police service.

The culture revealed in the focus groups was one of a beleaguered workforce struggling to meet the many and various demands made upon it. Additionally, respondents did not have a common sense of purpose of what the role of the organisation was. The dilemma was, that without such a consistency of purpose there was a manifest uncertainty as to which policing style was appropriate. Specialisation of departments appears also to have had a detrimental effect on working practices in that officers are working separately and not towards a common goal.

*h) Summary of analysis of findings from the design and cultural perspectives*

Durham Constabulary, as the police service in general, appears to have a great capacity for stimulating public interest, but such interest is not accompanied by one universally held perception of the policing role.

Greater understanding of the police role will not be achieved by remaining insular or standing still. There are, however, currently barriers within the organisation to open communication - both internally and externally.

One consistent factor identified is that all the design influences are inter-related. A further crucial factor identified is that the culture of the organisation is having a strong impact on the working practices of the organisation.

It has been shown, as with the design perspective on corporate image, that in an examination of the cultural influences on image i.e. service, employee and cultural factors, again all are interrelated.

The service provided by the police organisation is very much demand led and determined. Some of the demands made by the general public on the service were seen by the respondents as dealing with social problems and minor issues of public complaint. Many respondents wished for a clearer focus on their work and specifically a role which

was narrowly defined to crime related matters. These views undoubtedly influence the service provided to those demands which do not sit within a narrow crime remit.

The employees' own image of the service was strongly influenced by the culture. Two factors were again much in evidence; the barriers created between the ranks due to the military hierarchy of structure and the compartmentalising of functions into specialist units which has created further barriers to communication. The respondents did not feel that the whole organisation had a common sense of purpose although they would wish a crime fighting orientation.

Some working practices, those involving bending or breaking internal or legal rules, were seen as justified by many respondents in order that criminals were brought to justice. Recent court cases involving allegations of police corruption have shown how such working practices can also have a negative effect on the corporate image of the organisation.

It was generally found that the common beliefs of the respondents formed around objects of common concern. Issues of common concern at work related to the purpose, tasks, methods, nature of authority and social relations of the organisation. These varied according to department and section and according to hierarchy - but the emphasis was consistent. In practice the corporate culture was unlikely in any case to be completely homogenous.

The overall corporate culture of the organisation is seen in this analysis as the prime determinant of the image projected by the organisation.



# **CHAPTER NINE**

## **Police Culture and Image: four key influences**

### **a) Introduction**

In any study of the police, culture would occupy a central place, possibly because of the structure, remit and communication within the organisation. It is possible to identify from this research four key influences that both have a strong role to play in the culture and have a major bearing on the corporate image of the organisation. This chapter will discuss the four influences identified by the research in terms of the implications for existing knowledge on corporate image and the contribution towards the understanding of how the concept may be applicable to the police service.

The formation of police culture is obviously complex. The analysis of the findings reveals that the culture of the organisation has a major impact on how the organisation is perceived internally and externally. The influences of the culture on the nature and style of policing, it is suggested, is most significant in its effect on corporate image.

From the analysis the following are the identified key influences on police corporate image which provide the framework for this chapter:

- ▶ **Policy** - the influences on police policy of the historical development of the police
- ▶ **Function** - the tasks of law enforcement and public service
- ▶ **Management** - the impact of personal style of managers on service delivery
- ▶ **Communication** - the effects of structure and size on communication.

For each key influence the relationship between the culture and projected corporate image will be evidenced and discussed in the light of the analysis of the research findings.

**b) Policy** - the influences on police policy of historical development.

A fundamental principle of British policing is that it is done with the consent of the community. This has traditionally influenced the role and policy of policing.

To understand some of the strength of the tradition of the police service it is necessary, briefly, to examine the influences which have helped shape the direction of modern policing.

◌

*"....An organisation's history substantiates the reputation that substantiates the image..."* *Skaare (1993) p. 20*

Most police historians trace the origins of the modern police constable to the tythingman of Saxon times. He was elected by his peers and among his duties was the duty of

maintaining the peace. After the Norman conquest the system continued unchanged in its essentials. By the middle of the thirteenth century the term 'constable' came to be applied to the tythingman and about the same time, the system of 'watch and ward' was introduced by which all the able bodied men of a town served regularly under the control of the constable. It was a further emphasis of the principle of local communities policing themselves.

With the emergence of the office of justice of the peace in the fourteenth century constables became subservient to them. The office of constable, which was compulsory - every householder being liable to serve for a specified period, became increasingly onerous and time consuming. It lost most of its traditional status and in response the practice emerged of householders paying deputies rather than accepting the office themselves. Inefficiency and incompetence became widespread.

Additionally a system of policing which had evolved primarily to provide a degree of protection for small, rural communities, was fundamentally unsuited with the new law and order role occasioned by the consequences of the industrial revolution, the expansion of the population and the growth of towns. The nineteenth century reforms introduced full time, remunerated officers who were bureaucratically organised to facilitate their specialisation in police work. In the forty year period prior to the establishment of the Metropolitan Police in 1829 many parliamentary committees examined the problem of maintaining law and order. Opposition to the establishment of an organised, salaried, full time police force was widespread. Nevertheless, in the face of

opposition, legislation created the model upon which all subsequent policing has been based.

It should be recognised that the structure of the police system today and its legal basis echo not only the requirements of policing a century ago but also the fears and prejudices and the politics of the Victorian age. It has become trite law that the constable is an officer whose authority in legal terms is original, not delegated, and which is exercised at his or her own discretion by virtue of the office. The history and tradition of the office, however, do not support this proposition. The suggestion that the constable is immune from direction runs contrary not only to the history of the office, but also to the realities of the police organisation.

The concept of police independence is an issue. The somewhat cosy image presented, therefore, is that of the public spirited citizen in uniform, exercising circumscribed powers free from executive influence, for the benefit of the community as a whole. It is not surprising that the police hierarchy should wholeheartedly embrace it. But while police independence has been propagated by politicians, official bodies and the police themselves, evidence from the focus groups reveals it to be a myth:

*"....We seem often to react to 'flavours of the month'. Sometimes I don't know where the direction is coming from but direction there certainly is...."*

*"....I would agree that we sometimes get direction but to be honest its very much ad hoc. Most of the time we are left to our own devices...."*

*"....What the public want and what they get might be two different things. If someone has complained about a relatively minor matter but has been astute enough to voice it through a powerful medium - for example by writing to the Chief Constable or a local M.P. - then I can guarantee that not only do we go over the top in addressing the minor problem but we get it done pronto. The 'normal' member of the public does not get such attention...."*

*"....Influential bodies or agencies carry a lot of weight in determining in which we go. I don't mean our own senior officers although they also seem to bend with influential bodies because they don't want any hassle especially from the local press. Even the local parish councils carry some weight because if they complain about lack of attention about any matter and commit it to writing you can bet your bottom dollar we will respond out of all proportion to the nature of the complaint...."*

These comments reflect the nature of the traditions upon which the police service was founded i.e. accountability to local communities for a wide range of public service matters and independence to determine what policing is required. The relatively recent history of the police service has, however, placed great reliance on crime statistics and

'catching criminals'. It is little wonder then that officers brought up in this culture of law enforcement through crime detection should be almost dismissive of policing to local issues through councils or community groups. In a statement to the House of Commons the Prime Minister stated the following:

*"...We are seeking to reform and modernise the police force, so it can concentrate on the job it is really there for - catching criminals...."*

*Major (1993) Hansard*

As evidence indicates that crime is less than 30% of police work, (latest research published 1993 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary), this type of public statement can effect how the service is perceived by the public and the image it presents. The service provided should not have a crime focus - the public appear to want an all round social service dealing with lost and found property, domestic disputes and the like - yet officers, and now it is stated the Government, want a crime focus.

This mismatch of service and function has been further emphasised in the latest *Police and Magistrates Court Act 1994* in which the Home Secretary sets, nationally, five key objectives:

- ▶ maintaining or increasing the level of detection for violent crime
- ▶ increasing the detection rate for domestic burglary
- ▶ preventing crimes of a particular local concern

- ▶ providing high visibility policing
- ▶ responding promptly to emergency calls.

This appears to fly in the face of the police service being locally determined and delivered by the communities which it serves. It also again serves to emphasise a crime orientation of the police force.

In recent times there has been an increasing pressure on Chief Constables to show that their resources are being used as efficiently and effectively as possible. Forces have developed a variety of mechanisms for target setting and performance monitoring mainly based on concepts from industrial management. Additionally, the adoption of new technology has facilitated the quantification of many aspects of policing and a culture of 'objectivity' associated with its outputs has been engendered. However, analysis of the findings of this research shows that management, systems and technology have had little impact on service delivery of officers. There remains a powerful crime oriented or law enforcement culture that affects the corporate image of the organisation.

Further evidence from the focus groups indicated that public influence on day to day policing was limited. It was stated that policing is very much as it has always been, in their recollection, and that the organisation itself decides on its priorities. For example:

*"....I'm not sure we do recognise what the public wants. We know what they complain about yes - and to a certain extent we try to stop them*

*complaining - but we still make our own minds up about how we concentrate on some crime matters which I'm sure most of the public couldn't give a toss about...."*

*"....I haven't seen much change in what we do over the past twenty years - there's more to do - and sometimes we do it quicker - but essentially everyone still gets the excitement of the chase from crime - everything else is only a minor irritation - yes irritation because we really don't want to be doing some of the things the public wants - minor beat complaints for example - they're sometimes about nothing - but I'm sure the public wants us to handle them - it's just we don't want to...."*

(This conflict between the public expectation of service and the functions the police culture expect to deliver is highlighted in section ('d') of this chapter on 'function'.)

The influence of organisational policy on corporate image has previously been underestimated. Strategic and practical implications of policy on the delivery of a service or product are fundamentally important to the corporate image of the organisation. If the impact of policies, largely based on tradition, do not meet internal or external customers needs then this is a crucial omission.

The role of policies is, however, invariably complex. It will be almost inevitable that through the many channels of communication present in an organisation messages of



policy will be distorted - especially if they appear to be inconsistent with the needs particularly of internal customers.

c) *Summary of the influence of police policy based upon history*

The tradition of the police is rooted in providing a service to the public. Originally history shows that the focus of the role was one of crime - both prevention and detection. While many of the functions have changed to such an extent that crime, although still a primary responsibility, it only accounts for less than a third of the work. Nevertheless the overwhelming work ethic prevalent throughout this research remains the historical one of a crime focus. It is also something of folklore that the police provide the service the public demands of it.

*"...The way in which the organisation was originally formed and the values and personal styles of its first senior managers have profound effects on its later culture..."*                      *McLean & Marshall (1988) p. 12*

Although the police may be accountable to the public, through statutory community groups and police authorities, based upon this research the police service itself determines its priorities, role and function. These were found to be distinctly lacking in clarity and very much confused among officers interviewed. The problem is exacerbated because the public has not clearly defined the role of the service itself. The confusion,

lack of clarity and focus of direction directly, and adversely, effects the image of the service.

The complexity of the subject area of policy should not deter further research on this importance of this factor on an organisations corporate image.

d) **Function** - the tasks of law enforcement and public service

*"....It should be understood at the outset, that the principal object to be attained is the prevention of crime...."*                      *Sir Richard Mayne (1829)*

It is to this principle that the police force was formed in its current format but it now may not be the service expected or provided. While traditionally the police force was formed to provide a service to the community it is a moot question as to what service the community expects, (Chapter Six p. 145 ante). Law enforcement may be a primary task but historical accident and community convenience have provided the police with other functions such as lost and found dogs, lost and found property, rescue, traffic management, home security etc. This 'role' is now so diverse there is difficulty for anyone to accurately define it. In May 1993 the Association of Chief Police officers described the role thus:

*"....We cannot cure society's ills such as unemployment, poverty, homelessness, domestic violence and the sad breakdown of the influence*

*of the family on young people. But we do fulfil a vital role in holding together the social fabric of this country by giving a 24 hour social service that is not provided anywhere else...."*

*Your Police - The Facts (1993) p. 3*

Legislation is still being passed which provides evidence of the remarkably diffuse nature of the police role. For example, the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, where each police station in Durham Constabulary issues licences allowing interference with badger setts for the purpose of investigating offences. The licences are issued for and on behalf of the Nature Conservancy Council.

The respondents of the focus groups themselves questioned both whether the general public actually knew of some of the tasks they performed and if they did know whether they would want the police to be performing such tasks. For example:

*"....I bet the public would laugh at some of the things we do. Do they know that we check one-armed bandits (gaming machines) in every pub, club, bingo hall and community centre to see if the machine takes ten pence's or twenty pence's or how much it pays as a 'jackpot'? We even fill forms in about them...."*

An organisation's main function is, generally, not too difficult to determine. However, in the case of the police it is difficult to identify. Indeed many force mission statements are

general in nature and are about 'quality' issues not specific functions. For example, Durham:

*"....Durham Constabulary is committed to providing the highest quality of policing service and support to the people of County Durham..... To show everyone we serve compassion, courtesy, patience, calmness and restraint, and to perform policing tasks in an ethical manner...."*

*Durham Constabulary (1993)*

As this example shows there actually is no core mission, that is, the focus is not on what the police do; rather it is on how they do it. What is being communicated is a philosophy. The fundamental purpose of the organisation is not expressed - either internally to officers or externally to the public.

There are two further points regarding police function:

- ▶ the culture of the police service identified by this research indicates that it may not be synchronised with public expectation
- ▶ this problem is further exacerbated by the fact that the public have not identified what service they require from the police.

It can be supposed that the community determines the prevailing police style. In fact, specific community concerns rarely have more than a limited effect on police behaviour.

Although difficult, it is possible that the community can determine policy, within broad limits, when the public can observe some general condition for which the police can be held responsible (whether fairly or unfairly is another matter). The existence of widespread gambling or of organised prostitution is visible and local political authorities can influence how vigorously police should stop these activities.

It is, however, one thing to decide that something 'should be done' about crime on the streets and quite another thing to decide exactly what it is that should be done. In reality the prevailing police function and style is not explicitly determined by community decisions, though a few of its elements may be shaped by these decisions. The police are in many cases keenly sensitive to their political environment without in all cases being governed by it. By sensitive it is meant that they are alert to, and concerned about, what is said about them publicly, who is in authority over them, how their material and career interests are satisfied, and how complaints about them are handled. For example:

*"....Someone mentioned about the local M.P. earlier, well I can tell you our M.P. has a hot line to the boss and I often think we're doing the constituency work for him - sorting out their problems so he can be seen in a good light. We always respond - and it takes time because it also always involves reports and letters. Joe Bloggs ringing up or writing in doesn't get the same attention or service...."*

*"....If the press carry a story about some vandalism or recently about young teenagers twocing (taking a car without owners consent), then we make sure that we are seen to be doing something. I think we just try to protect our backs from criticism - not tell it how it really is - the fact is we can do very little about twocing (taking car without owners consent) - but we set up obs (special observations) or squads when our priorities should be somewhere else...."*

The true function to meet the needs of the community means that policies, operating procedures, and objectives of the organisation are determined deliberately and systematically by someone or some body in the community with the authority to make these decisions. The functions and tasks of the police found in this research are, with very few exceptions, determined by the police themselves without any deliberate or systematic intervention by the community (the policies are affected in unintended ways by various influences of the community - see the previous paragraphs of this chapter - but that is another matter).

This is not to indicate that the functions and tasks so determined are necessarily wrong or that a 'participatory democracy' governing the police is a remedy for social problems. Though there is a great deal to be said for involving the police more deeply in community affairs, for choosing what policing role the community prefer, and for guiding officers actions more clearly, it is not clear that redistributing authority over the

police is the proper means. It would also be a mistake to expect too much from even the most imaginative redirection of police efforts.

There is also no general agreement in society on the most important goals of policing, not to mention the means of attaining those important goals. In addition to the disagreement among people about what the police should be doing, individuals and society often change their opinions and priorities over time or in response to perceived emergencies. For example, the fluctuation in social attitudes to drugs or to 'drink-driving'.

Evidence from the respondents of the focus groups, however, revealed that little in fact had changed with regard to everyday policing despite the frequently heralded 'era of unprecedented change' cliché.

That certain changes will enable the police to perform their task better does not mean that they will perform it to everybody's, or anybody's satisfaction. Nor does it necessarily mean any improvement in the police corporate image. However, to improve any organisations corporate image there is a need to:

*"...Match internal customer needs and values, with the internal products and services that are created, in order to fulfil the mission of the organisation and the vision of the people in it..."*

*Thomson (1990) p. 41*

There has been consistent evidence in the analysis of the findings that there is a mismatch between internal and external perceptions of the role and functions of the police service. There is also a lack of external 'customer' focus because of a combination of factors; there is difficulty in identifying the customer, there is little if any competition, there are assumptions about what the customer wants and so on. In this regard the police service may be unique as an organisation - the role and function - the tasks it has to carry out for the customer have not been clearly defined.

e) *Summary of function - the tasks of law enforcement and public service*

In summary, the police can provide an emergency service for many community problems but they cannot solve them. What problems the community want the police to solve is unclear. What problems the police want to solve themselves is ingrained in the culture of the organisation.

The operating procedures and objectives of the police organisation are not set by the public at large although they are intended to be. Certain major influences, for example Councillors, Members of Parliament and the media, are seen by officers to exert too much influence. However, much police work is determined by the police themselves.

The overall effect of the police function on the corporate image of the organisation is to reinforce the traditional imagery of the organisation. While the necessity and danger of



the job appears to be acknowledged by the public, the service is not seen as modern and by some commentators it is seen as resistant to change.

Unlike other organisations there will be greater difficulty in implementing a corporate image programme in the police service. This is because, as yet, the service has been unable to articulate what it does, or why it does it. The core business has not been identified by either the general public or the organisation itself.

*f) Management* - the impact of personal style of managers

While all employees shape the culture of an organisation the corporate culture is not the property of any one group. This is no matter what the influence of rigid hierarchy and bureaucracy, *Dore (1973), Ouchi (1981), Pascale and Athos (1981), Morgan (1986)*. However, management are a major determinant of culture and have a considerable impact on how culture is shaped or managed, *McClean and Marshall (1988)*.

*"....Fortunately applicants to police forces have a sense of service and commitment above the above minimum threshold, but this commitment is not always sustained and, in many cases, the reasons can be found in the culture and management style...."* *Butler (1992) p. 68*

Senior management have what is termed by *McLean and Marshall (op. cit.)* 'symbiotic power' - their behaviour carrying implicit but highly conspicuous messages about what

factors are important to the organisation, what can be neglected and what is 'acceptable' or to be avoided. Although the respondents in the focus groups were not chosen from specific Sub-Divisions, (each force is divided into separate areas of command named Sub-Divisions, usually consisting of approximately two hundred officers), it was, nevertheless, possible to identify the different styles of Sub-Divisional Commanders, (Superintendents), to which the respondents were attached.

Though the legal and organisational constraints under which the police work are similar in one Sub-Division to the next, the situations which the police address varies from place to place. For example, street crime and disorder are more common in low income areas than in high income areas. This may, in part, explain the variance in policing styles. However, evidence from respondents reveals that Sub-Divisional behaviour in Durham Constabulary is affected by the values, interests and perceived style of the Sub-Divisional Commander. For example:

*"....The boss is red hot on crime - we don't touch traffic - I think he'd have a fit if we brought breathalysers in not burglars!..."*

*"....They (senior management) are always on about high visibility - getting out on foot to show the flag especially on estates. We don't come into the office without permission even for paperwork because we will be asked why we are in the office and not out on patrol...."*

The differences in Sub-Divisional style and methods was manifest and recognised by all the respondents in the focus groups:

*"....Moving from one Sub-Division to another is like transferring from the earth to the moon... the difference in priorities is stark...but at least I know what the boss wants in my current Sub-Division...."*

*"....At our Sub-Division we know exactly where we stand. The Superintendent is old fashioned - if we do a professional job he'll back us up to the hilt - if he takes flak because the wheel comes off he'll chew our heads off...."*

*"....I know that as a member of C.I.D. on my Sub-Division that I'm on the 'A' team. The boss lives and breathes crime and I can understand that - because the pressures are on him to have good detection rates...."*

These marked differences in style and methods in the form of mirroring the perceived values and standards of Sub-Divisional managers can work against corporacy and a single consistent corporate image.

In a research project which examined the work of foot patrol officers a survey by *Butler (1992)* also showed significant differences between what supervisors and managers believed officers should be doing and the actual work carried out:

*"....The differences were typified by the greater emphasis on law enforcement activities by the Sergeants and Inspectors, rather than community problem solving work emphasised by the Constables..."*

*p. 78*

The matter of police discretion at an operational level also acts to complicate police management. If police officers merely applied rules and laws in clear cut situations the police management would simply involve ensuring the rules and laws are being applied correctly. Instead, police officers decide what actions to take based on what *Bittner (1970)* calls, '*an intuitive grasp of situational exigencies*', (p. 275). These situational exigencies necessitate that officers have some leeway to use judgement and discretion because each situation is, to some extent, unique. The skill of the police manager is in the balancing of the demands for rules, for monitoring and measuring performance and for discretion.

If the manager is seeking to establish that the core role of police officers revolves around law enforcement it follows that other areas of the police role, many of which have become expected by the general public, will be avoided or neglected. The perception and image of the service in a Sub-Division may not evolve in keeping with either a crime or social service management style and the corporate image would be affected as a consequence.

It is again suggested that this may be a unique situation in terms of a corporate image programme. While in other organisations, including those with a rigid hierarchical structure, managers undoubtedly influence communication and service delivery styles, the militaristic hierarchy of the police coupled with the autonomy of Sub-Divisions means that certain managers have a disproportionately significant influence on the way their staff work.

**g) *Summary of the impact of the personal style of police managers***

Given the reality that police officers perform widely varying duties in diverse situations with little direct supervision or management, police management activities may be regarded as incidental. This is not so. While the perceptions of operational officers and managers as to the role of the police service of Durham Constabulary have been shown to be different the respondents were nevertheless strongly influenced by their Sub-Divisional managers.

The importance of this point from a corporate image perspective is that if different managers espouse different values and ideas of priorities for objectives or service then different images are going to be projected of the organisation.

It has also been demonstrated that traditional police management has emphasised internal rules and procedures as *Butler (op. cit.)* suggests '*filling in crime reports correctly rather than ensuring the needs of the burglary victim*', (p. 86). Again the importance

from the corporate image point of view is that management of service standards is going to impact more on image than supervision of internal bureaucracy.

There is little evidence of corporacy in Durham Constabulary where employees share a common sense of mission and purpose. This will mean there will be greater difficulty in attempting to introduce a corporate image programme.

*h) Communication* - the effects of structure and size.

Patterns of communication and interaction within organisations are complex and affected by many diverse variables. There are indications that two of these variables are the structure and size of the organisation. Evidence from respondents in this research showed that the structure and size of the police organisation has a considerable impact on the culture of the organisation which in turn affects the corporate image of the service.

As has been previously stated the police organisation is a rigid hierarchy. Traditionally, emphasis has been placed upon promotion as a means of reward. While current government reviews and inquiries into the service have highlighted the need for the structure of the organisation to be 'flattened', and indeed this has been occurring since 1991, the aspirations for advancement of many officers interviewed remained high. One effect of this appears to be that communication 'upward' is of a very limited type. For example:

*"....We try to sort things out at shift level....I wouldn't want the boss to know half of what goes on....(laughter)"*

*"....Well it's true. I spend half my time 'covering up' why we haven't done something, or why something wasn't done on time. I'm hardly likely to want to tell the Chief Inspector or Superintendent - they do the promotion assessments...."*

*"....We tell them the good news of course....(laughter)"*

Generally, of course, pleasant matters are more likely to be communicated upward than unpleasant ones and achievements are more likely to be passed upward than information about errors or difficulties encountered at lower levels. There was evidence, however, of a considerable screening of information passed upward. This, in particular, was problem related or of a type which might reflect negatively upon the competence and thus, indirectly, upon the security or progress of officers. The mobility aspirations - striving for advancement - was strongly manifest among the Sergeant and Inspector focus groups who stated that they always maximised the positive and minimised the negative aspects of communication upward.

This appears to have three effects. It means firstly that the accuracy of information given to middle and senior management is distorted; secondly that it reinforces subcultures of

small shifts, departments and sections who restrict information flow leaving their groups; and thirdly the policy makers and management at strategic level are unable to accurately reflect the problems at 'grass roots' level because it is distorted. For example:

*"...We run a tight ship here. My shift know I'll look after them if the wheel comes off and they trust me to sort things out. It makes for a good, solid working relationship...."*

*"...I think the only problem with that is you're too parochial and don't think about the wider implications - like how your shift actually fits into the overall Sub-Division...."*

*"...The bosses are out of touch so when they make their pronouncements to one and all - including the public and media - it doesn't have much relation to reality...."*

What also intensifies the communications problems in the police organisation is the fact that the relationships among the officers are in a continual state of flux. While this may not be an unusual finding in organisations the scale of the problem identified here is a major one. Transfers, promotions, retirements and appointments appear to have a significant impact on morale, motivation and culture of the police organisation. This was highlighted by respondents on numerous occasions and often referred to specifically with regard to appraisal systems. For example:



*"...I've had three Inspectors and two different Sergeants in the past two years. If I also include the number of people who have done acting (performing the role of supervisor or manager for a temporary period due to holidays, sickness etc.) then it must be a dozen different people I've had - how can anyone do my staff appraisal - no-one knows me..."*

*"...There's just no consistency of supervision from week to week never mind month to month. I work on a Section and in the past usually that's where there's been some continuity - but not now - the Sergeant is usually either away 'acting' (temporary replacement for Inspector) or taken into the Town to cover or in the custody office - we really just run our Section on our own..."*

The relative size of the organisation has also affected both communication systems and culture within the police. As was described in Chapter Seven, (pp. 195-204 ante), there are strong subcultures in the service. Rather than communication linkages between subcultures, (Departments, Squads, Sub-Divisions, Uniform, C.I.D., Specialists), there are communication restrictions. Additionally some message flows have become so regularised and formalised that they in themselves are less than efficient in being able to communicate messages. For example:

*"....Other than the moves or promotions I don't really read weekly orders...."*

*"....The law amendments aren't relevant to me so I don't read them...."*

*"....Internal memos I could decorate a room with every few months. If it's important the Sergeant will tell us anyway...."*

As information passes through organisations successive editing takes place and inferences drawn which fit the subculture of the recipients. This was termed many years ago by *March and Simon (1958)* as '*uncertainty absorption*', (p. 102). One of the results of uncertainty absorption is that incomplete information influences decision making.

The decisions and policies of police managers are seen as out of touch with reality. The single most common and consistent criticism of police managers by focus group respondents was that they had '*lost touch*' with police work on the street and that they could not remember '*how it was out there*'.

*"....Things have changed drastically - everything from violence, pressure of constant high workload, lack of respect - the list is endless...."*

*"....I don't think that it's their (senior managers) fault. But you can quickly lose grasp of operational reality on the streets - yet some have been in Headquarters for ten years or more - how long is it since the Chief or the executive officers last worked the street - twenty years, twenty five years?..."*

Increased communication between the ranks, particularly upward communication to the hierarchy, would help resolve these current cultural barriers. Downward communication would then be viewed much more positively and a consistent corporate image projected.

*i) Summary of communication - the effects of size and structure*

The police service is a centralised organisation with authority centralised at the top of a rigid hierarchy. Some of the effects of the hierarchy, especially with regard to communication, have been discussed.

The influence of communication on corporate image is important. The focus groups have shown that there is little co-ordination of effort in the organisation. Headquarters Departments, which in theory should be performing a supportive role, are viewed negatively as distant masters. At an operational level subcultures between specialist departments also work against any sense of a corporate approach or an integrated team working towards common goals.

In the absence of good, clear communication internally the effect on external communication is marked. As a consequence the potential for improved corporate image is limited.

*j) Conclusions on the key influences on police culture and image*

The four sections of this chapter identify the key influences on the culture and image of Durham Constabulary and the police organisation.

Classical organisational theory has tended to view the employee as an inhuman instrument performing pre-assigned duties; employees being constants rather than as variables. The unique nature of the police, their role and function, means that such a perspective cannot be advanced in respect of the police.

Police officers have considerable discretion in carrying out their duties. While the constable, like many employees is bound by orders, the practical realities of policing means that officers can determine their own priorities. Managers of the service also have almost total discretion in determining policing policy and practice and they exert influence on operational style in their own Sub-Divisions.

The four key influences are significant in the way they influence the methods and style of policing of operational police officers. The methods and style of those officers in constant day to day contact with the general public considerably affects the image

projected outside the organisation.

# CHAPTER TEN

## Conclusions: old concepts - new terminology?

### *a) Introduction*

With so many issues surrounding both the police service and the subject of corporate image, what conclusions can be drawn from this work?

This chapter identifies the main conclusions of this thesis and the framework is provided by the answers both to the initial questions posed for the thesis, (Chapter One p. 7 ante), and to the central questions outlined for this research, (Chapter Five pp. 92-93 ante) .

The concept of corporate image, as identified in this work, is not particularly illuminating. What corporate image does offer, however, is a term which provides a focus for, and facilitates the management of, key functions of an organisation. It appears that the term corporate image may simply provide a propitious umbrella expression. It will be argued that corporate image combines some very old concepts - but uses new terminology.

Furthermore, there is no general agreement on what, precisely, is corporate image. Perhaps, above all, it is a hypothetical construct. There also remains a distinct lack of clarity between the terms corporate image and corporate identity. How corporate image

is defined and explained depends on which one of the very different perspectives of corporate image exist. Different schools, traditions and disciplines compete in their explanation of the concept. There is no agreement on basic data; all facts seem relevant and plausible, and it was difficult to organise the data in terms of its significance, since that can only be provided by an effective theory. What has been established in this work is how important the culture and sub cultures of any organisation, and specifically Durham Constabulary, are to any corporate image programme.

Finally, Durham Constabulary and the police service appear unable to clarify their role and function. This is a further central issue and conclusion of this work as it then becomes more difficult to establish the applicability of a corporate image programme to the organisation.

***b) What is the concept of corporate image?***

Corporate image is based upon perceptions. Perceptions derive from attitudes, values and beliefs of individuals. In much the same way as a 'fact' is something regarded as being true and having a reality, corporate image is an impression on which basis assumptions are made about the reality of an organisation.

Much of perception is an active, constructive process on the part of perceivers. The perceiver has a set of unconscious assumptions about the world - an internal representation or schema is now the term used in cognitive psychology. Images, including corporate image, are cues which point to a schema in order to attribute

meaning. Inference is a useful description of this process, though it includes inferences of many different kinds, for example efficiency of an organisation can be inferred, as can quality or value. To infer is to reach a conclusion about something which cannot be apprehended directly, but only on the basis of assumptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and various pieces of incomplete evidence. Put simplistically there is more to seeing than meets the eyes!

There is an interplay between images supplied by the eyes and 'knowledge' - knowledge is used to make personal sense of the images that are being received. The conclusion reached here is that the perception 'created' by corporate image is a function not only of the visual image of the organisation - a tenet previously espoused by the design perspective on the concept, but equally it is the creation of the accumulation of information or knowledge that is available to the individual at a given time, (Chapter Three pp. 46-48 ante).

What is also highlighted and emphasised by this thesis is that this information and knowledge is applicable to both internal and external audiences - both have an influence on the corporate image of the organisation, (Chapter Three pp. 49-52 ante).

The critical point to note is that corporate image is intangible. It cannot be observed or studied directly. It is only inferred. The concept is an abstraction, a hypothetical construct of which there is no one, absolute and correct, meaning. It is also multi-dimensional.



Adopting a holistic approach to the subject, (Chapter Five pp. 92-100 ante), during this research has enabled some of the basic components of corporate image to be either confirmed or identified. These components were found to be old concepts previously identified as key factors affecting organisational performance. For example, a primary influence on the reputation of an organisation is the perception of the organisation gained by individuals who either have a stereotype of the organisation or have used the service or product offered by the organisation, (the 'public image' and 'product/service' components Chapter Two p. 21 ante). The veracity of the statement is self evident and well understood.

There is also little doubt that the reputation of an organisation will affect attitudes towards it - and this may impact directly on service or product usage, (Chapter Two p. 24 ante). This has also been previously identified and acknowledged:

*"...Real effectiveness lies in the intangibles of customer relationships  
and the company's overall reputation...." Mitchell (1995) p. 77*

Similarly, the 'environmental' component of corporate image is a conveniently elastic term to describe many of the external or outside influences which affect organisations. The notion that an organisation's situational context and environment significantly affects its performance is again not new.

Furthermore, organisational public relations programmes have always attempted to improve perceptions of brands, products, services and indeed organisations as a whole.

Managing external organisational communication is crucial to corporate success. Equally, internal communication, sometimes referred to as internal marketing, for example, *Thompson (1990) p. 2*, is acknowledged as a powerful influence on corporate effectiveness - the 'communication' component of corporate image is therefore, perhaps, simply a more fashionable term to describe old concepts.

Moreover, how employees see their own organisation and the culture of the organisation, two further components of corporate image, have both previously been recognised as having significant effects on the organisation:

*"....all groups develop norms, including common beliefs and social behaviour, and especially shared ways of doing or thinking about the main group activity...."*

*Argyle 1994 p. 169*

However, even given that many, if not all, of the factors mentioned above are not new concepts, it does appear that the term corporate image is a helpful or advantageous nomenclature. This is because it brings together several disciplines as an umbrella expression for key factors or components of organisational performance. It therefore allows for management of these factors under a single term or programme.

**c) *What is the relationship between corporate image and culture?***

One of the basic principles identified is that for corporate image to be both positive and enduring there must be a recognition of the relationship between image and culture - the

culture communicating consistent facts about the organisation - not superficial identity or image promotion.

The emphasis on the design perspective on the subject, previously discussed during this work, (Chapter Three), has tended to devalue the link between corporate image and culture, making image a 'soft option'. In particular the work of designers drafting new logos for organisations has led to much criticism and, it is concluded, has detracted from the possible importance that a corporate image programme could bring to an organisation:

*"...One of the problems with corporate identity designers is that they behave as though they were Michelangelo and they're not; they're commercial people..."*

*Bell (1992) p. 18*

Additionally, there remains much confusion over the terms corporate identity and corporate image. Designers initially focused on visible, visual factors of an organisation's identity. This has now been broadened to include intangible factors such as culture, (Chapter Three pp. 40-42 ante). Unfortunately, the use of the terms interchangeably has led to a lack of clarity about their meaning which has also detracted from the value of the concepts. A corporate image is an overall perception of an organisation based upon many factors and influences, (Chapter Two p. 17-18 ante), and is not simply the visible manifestations of the organisation.

*Schein (1985)* states that *'overt behaviour is always determined by cultural predisposition'*; meaning that the shared values, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and perceptions influence individuals in their organisational behaviour. The importance of this as far as the police service is concerned is that it because there is no 'product' from the service there is an increase in the importance of the contact between employees, (police officers), and customers, (the general public), (Chapter Five pp. 106-107 ante). As has been stated part of the creation of a corporate image is the role of information and knowledge gained from contact with the organisation. It follows that if cultural norms guide or influence the operating procedures of individuals within organisations (their behaviour), then this strongly impacts on the image projected by the organisation.

*d) Does corporate image have an influence on corporate effectiveness?*

Corporate image as a programme is not merely sartorial in the sense of being concerned solely with identity, (Chapter Three pp. 52-57 ante). It should not, therefore, be approached simplistically. The philosophy of corporate image has in the past attracted criticism as being soft and idealistic; that essentially the concern is with superficial identity. However, successful corporate image programmes appear to have had a systematic, organised basis and were not remotely idealistic, (Chapter Three pp. 58-64 ante).

Corporate image programmes which involve all the key components previously identified, (Chapter Two pp. 20-22 ante), are concerned with radically reviewing how an organisation works in order to achieve improved performance. Grasping that much

puts researchers in the right focus - only to discover the vast confusion about the focus chosen. The haphazard nature of the various perspectives of corporate image is responsible for the different guises, terms, methods and meanings that it generates.

To successfully implement a corporate image programme all core processes of an organisation have to be identified and re-examined. This is the nucleus of the approach of the cultural perspective described in Chapter Four. Some elements of successful corporate image programmes which were approached from a cultural perspective appear relevant to the police service, (Chapter Three pp. 58-64 ante).

For example, the barriers insulating one function from another must be removed and the mystery about what other people do within the organisation must be dissipated. This has proved a particular problem for the police organisation, (Chapter Seven pp. 239-245 ante), and will be discussed later in this chapter with specific reference to Durham Constabulary. A pre - requisite for a successful corporate image programme is that everyone has to understand the process. It follows and it is concluded that corporate image is also about communication - which has to be comprehensive.

A corporate image programme can be used to review all aspects of people and processes in a single co-ordinated approach. Hence, a corporate image programme becomes much greater than the sum of its parts. The corporate image programme can be complex, but it is essential that the messages to key audiences are simple and consistent. Driving the programme should be a commitment by the organisation to emphasise the benefits of the strategy both internally and externally.

Organisations expecting corporate image to take over a problem and deliver a solution should acknowledge that, at best, a corporate image programme will provide initial inertia. To be effective as a tool to aid strategy for improvement, full involvement of those who know best, i.e. the employees, appears vital. Projecting publicly, or broadcasting a corporate identity is superficial; corporacy begins in private - within an organisation - and then spreads outwards. It is an art of self expression and, therefore, the values reflected must be the right ones.

There is a danger in any organisation of complacency, in mediocrity, in stagnation, in surviving, and even of corporate conceit. A perception, which is in fact what constitutes corporate image, is nebulous, but may be a key measure to manage any change. Corporate image may set the agenda, or act as a catalyst, for change.

As a management tool corporate image may be rather like selecting a gear in a car: no one technique is always right. The organisation chooses the one that is appropriate to the information available. But, to continue the metaphor, corporate image may also be the lights of the car. No one will see a car, driver or passengers travelling without lights at night. Corporate image could provide the lights for the car, driver and passengers. They will then see and be seen. Of course implementing a programme may require caution and diplomacy. Higher visibility may mean more exposure. Which often leads to greater scrutiny. But if the organisation is to become vibrant rather than dormant, corporate image, properly managed, may assist corporate strategy and improve organisational effectiveness.

e) *Could the concept of corporate image have relevance for the police service?*

The police service has many images. To many, through media portrayal of the service, it may seem an exciting, even romantic, occupation - with accompanying images. These are not necessarily images that the service itself would disavow. Even internally there is still a mystique about certain departments which shows in some of the illustrations from the focus groups, (Chapter Seven pp. 242-243 ante).

Is there a reality behind the images of the police? Are they corrupt and angry? Guardians and angels? Which? Most people, particularly those without any direct experience of the police service, may plump for both. In recent times the general public have read of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and so on. The apparent dismay felt by commentators and public alike over these revelations appears to have been matched by an almost total lack of surprise. Retained in the public's collective retina is a kaleidoscope of past images of police getting it wrong; Steven Waldorf, Joy Gardener, Crime Squad officers receiving payments from criminals - each associated with bad practice, hasty actions, hamfisted processes. It is a harsh vision. A poor corporate image. But is it fair?

Police officers, like social workers, firemen or doctors make headlines only when something has gone seriously wrong. This means that they are judged in relation to their effectiveness in a crisis, when in fact most of what they do is routine. It has been shown that the vast majority of police work is of a social service nature with only a minor

proportion concerned with crime, (Chapter Six pp. 131-134 ante). But it is in the area of crime that the media judge success and failure.

Historically, the police have not marketed their service. Indeed this was one of the initial catalysts to this research, (Chapter One pp. 1-4 ante). Corporate image could provide a focus for marketing the service both internally and externally.

This appears a particularly important role for a corporate image programme because this work has shown there is much confusion internally and externally about the role and function of the police service, (Chapter Six pp. 128-135 ante).

A Chief Constable recently asked the author on an interview for promotion whether it was considered that the police service was the guardian of public morality. Without pondering on either the answer, or the relevance of the question in such a context, the thoughts engendered crystallised some further conclusions of the research. Using morality as an example, there are a range of matters, including prostitution, pornography, child abuse, homosexuality, sexual deviancy and so on, which regularly fall within the police remit. Why? What other organisation is unable to clarify its role and function? This was a central issue identified in terms of the police service and corporate image.

To return to the morality example as evidence of the diversity of the police role and function, there is nothing to suggest that the activities covered by morality laws are regulated by police intervention. For example, those societies that have made soliciting



legal do not have a worse 'problem' with prostitution than ours; but neither do they have police committed to monitoring kerb crawlers or police officers dressed in jeans loitering about public lavatories waiting for an improper advance.

*"...There is no general agreement on what is a policeman's job.....some tasks are directed by statute, others by humanity or some a desire to build up good relations with the public...."*                      *Moyle (1993) p. 13*

Uncertainty and diversity are at the heart of police work. The lack of clarity about the police role identified during this research may be the most significant issue for a corporate image programme to address.

*f) Summary of initial questions*

It has been shown that the term corporate image is a broad notion which encompasses old concepts related to organisations. The value of a corporate image programme appears to lie in the holistic nature of its many components. Not least the fact that organisational cultural issues may be addressed using the vehicle of such a programme.

The corporate image programme may appear soft and unspecific and ostensibly not cultural at all. It may also sound idealistic. But the research has shown that it can be practical - which appears critical in the light of the culture of Durham Constabulary revealed by this research - and this will be referred to in the sections following .

Corporate image has many facets. Not everyone will be enamoured by the idea of the introduction of a corporate image programme. Understandably many will not relish change. Some will be dubious about the practicality. Yet radically reviewing an organisation may be the function of the corporate image programme.

The above answers to these initial questions posed, (Chapter One p. 7 ante), are now followed by the answers to the research questions, (Chapter Five, pp. 92-93 ante), in the next sections.

*h) What are the influences on Durham Constabulary corporate image?*

The significant influences on the corporate image of any organisation, (Chapter two pp. 20-22 ante), were, of course, prevalent as components of the corporate image of Durham Constabulary.

The 'public image' influences, or the stereotype image, of the Constabulary is positive, (Chapter Seven p.159 ante). However, the summary of attitudes to the police in County Durham, (Chapter Seven p. 160 ante), state that personal contact between officers and the public is the largest single factor in determining the feelings towards the police and the more contact with the Force the less positively the service is viewed. The focus groups involving the Special Constables confirmed this view, (Chapter Seven pp. 161-166 ante).

Environmental influences on Durham Constabulary corporate image were identified as legislative, community policing and public order issues, (Chapter Seven p. 169 ante). National legislation was seen as a constraint on providing a policing service in the County, (Chapter Seven pp. 169-173 ante).

Two fundamental questions were raised by the analysis of the research on community policing, (Chapter Seven p. 174 ante). These revolve around issues of accountability and role. The problem of accountability, as seen by respondents, is to identify who, within or outside the service, is setting the agenda of policing, and then, inevitably, who is accountable for the way the service is delivered at basic operational level. On the question of role, at least at operational level, this was ill defined, confused, and determined at the lowest levels of Durham Constabulary, (Chapter Seven p. 182 ante). There was a consistency of view of respondents that there was too much top down management in Durham Constabulary highlighted by what was described as '*lip service to quality*'. This was manifest, in their view, by mission statements, objectives, performance indicators and quality standards booklets which, in their opinion, have vitiated officers' efforts towards service. The denigration of senior management was loud on this point, (Chapter Seven pp. 187-195 ante).

The final environmental influence concerning public order and policing industrial disputes was found to be historical in that, in the main, it was confined to folklore in the way that previous national incidents had been policed, (Chapter Seven pp. 178-180 ante). Nevertheless, stereotype images were held by respondents, characterised by negative views, of participants in any social issue or public order demonstration. The

attitudes displayed could influence any responses to policing such situations and as such affect the corporate image of Durham Constabulary.

Communication influences on Durham Constabulary corporate image were both external and internal. Externally, views of respondents were confined to an antipathy towards the media due to a perceived imbalance in reporting of police activity, (Chapter Seven pp. 185-187 ante). The paradox is that little is done at an operational level to redress what is seen as the imbalance because many officers refuse to cooperate with the local media, (Chapter Seven p. 185 ante).

Internal communication also appears a significant influence on the Constabulary corporate image. Analysis from the focus groups revealed that there is a multi-layered opacity in Durham Constabulary organisational structure. There are suspicions and rivalry between departments, (Chapter Seven pp. 195-203 ante). Additionally, there is a distinct lack of communication throughout the organisation; this was both laterally and in the organisational hierarchy. The most recent example of Departments not communicating with one another is revealed in the fact that in the Constabulary is that over the past ten years:

*"....An audit has found in excess of 130 micro computer systems from 14 different suppliers using over 70 different pieces of software...."*

*Durham Constabulary 1993*

The significance of these communication influences will be discussed in section 'j' following.

Analysis of service influences on Durham Constabulary corporate image revealed that the service in the County remains reactionary and 'police' driven. Respondents believed that the whole organisation reacts in an ad hoc way to internal and external influences, (Chapter Seven pp. 174-176 ante). Strong views were expressed about lack of staff at operational level which, it was considered, adversely affected service delivery, (Chapter Seven pp. 208-213 ante).

'Employee image' influences revealed that those responsible for service delivery viewed the Constabulary more negatively than the general public - arguably the customers of the organisation, (Chapter Seven pp. 219-224 ante). Again dissatisfaction expressed in this case internally may be communicated externally and this will be reviewed in section 'j' following.

The last of the identified influences on Durham Constabulary corporate image, that of culture will be discussed specifically in the next section, which answers the second of the research questions.

***i) What are the prevalent cultures of Durham Constabulary?***

As defined in Chapter Two, (pp. 25-26), the term culture means the deeper level of values, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and perceptions, that are shared by members of

any organisation and which affect their behaviour. In a service organisation such as Durham Constabulary this is an especially significant and important influence on the image it projects. While it is in a sense a 'corporate' culture because it has some general commonality in most organisations, it is inevitably not a single culture but various sub cultures. This was found to be particularly so in the case of Durham Constabulary, (Chapter pp. 196-203 ante), where several cultures were operating within the larger culture of the organisation.

Analysis revealed a culture of a forceful and concentrated crime orientation which obviated a total service ethic, (Chapter Seven pp. 248-249 ante). Additionally, there were, (as previously reported in section 'h'), barriers to communication between departments and ranks. The information flow upward was specifically affected by the perceived management style. Cultures appear to have developed in Durham Constabulary of an 'insurance mentality'. Errors and minor mistakes from a bygone era have encouraged a style with an emphasis on checking and monitoring - with associated bureaucracy. For example, checking of police station records:

*"....At all Sub-Divisional stations, an officer of the rank of Inspector or above will examine daily all station books (list of 8) and will ensure that all entries have been correctly made, cross referenced and checked. On completion of the examination the officer checking must initial and date all books examined. All other station books (list of further 15) will be examined weekly and initialled and dated by an officer of the rank of Inspector or above..."*

*Section 7 Standing Orders*

Monitoring is also constant and centralised from Police Headquarters. For example, during 1993 April to September, on the author's Sub-Division there occurred an Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary Inspection, a County Council Audit, a Police National Computer Audit and a Headquarters Performance and Evaluation Audit. Additionally, there are monthly meetings between senior Sub-Divisional management and the Chief Constable at Headquarters where managers are 'called to account' regarding performance indicators.

Durham Constabulary, therefore, is seen to have a critical style of management. This culture of inspection and checking both devalues the discretionary responsibility of operational officers and is also a hindrance to the upward flow of information, (Chapter Seven pp. 187-188 ante). This may go some way to explain that there is, in the perception of the operational officers of the focus groups, a cultural lag at the highest levels of management, especially when it comes to understanding the pressures of day to day police work, (Chapter Seven p. 247 ante).

To summarise the prevalent cultures; they are typified by insular and compartmentalised attitudes, they are rank as well as department or specialism specific and, overall, at operational level there is a potent crime orientation.

j) *What impact, if any, may these cultures have on the image of the organisation?*

This is difficult to quantify in terms of this research on Durham Constabulary corporate image. It would be simplistic to make cavalier statements about either culture or image. For example, recent academic literature in both the fields of culture and image suggest organisational effectiveness can be improved through creating 'strong and appropriate' cultures and a 'clear and consistent' corporate image. This, in the view of the author, contains a large assumption that culture and image can be changed to suit the purposes of the organisation.

Common values and beliefs, expressed attitudes and behaviour are all norms, however, which do affect all working life. What has been identified by *Argyle (1994)* is that group cohesiveness has important consequences in that members who cooperate and help each other, have high job satisfaction in working and which '*as a result have low absenteeism and turnover as well as greater productivity*', (p. 168). As there is a direct link, particularly in service organisations, between the behaviour of the workforce and the image projected by the organisation, the cultures and sub cultures of Durham Constabulary inevitably affect the image projected by the organisation.

There was evidence in the focus groups of a lack of cohesiveness, a lack of a common sense of purpose and barriers to internal communication as previously reported. These attitudes and cultures can underpin and shape behaviour in unobtrusive yet powerful ways. As actions of operational police officers are subject to close and often intense



scrutiny any such cultures which affect organisational performance have attendant influences on the image the organisation projects.

Durham Constabulary culture still appears to be in the grip of police tradition and traditional attitudes. Isolation and insularity have left a set of traditions which appear all enduring. The culture of insularity may be particularly significant in terms of image as little is done, by those at operational level, to promote or market the police service offered. Furthermore, a synthesis of the views of the focus group respondents reveal the organisation to be a large, amorphous bureaucracy. It was the view that maintaining law and order has become a pretext for protecting existing interests, and the interests of the public are low on the lists of priority. One respondent referred to it as '*megalomania*'.

The apparent mismatch between the many and various functions expected by the general public of the police service, balanced against the role and function as seen by those at an operational level within Durham Constabulary, undoubtedly affects the image of the service. The differing Sub Divisional cultures, reflecting those in command in each of the areas of the Constabulary, also presents a problem in terms of a consistency of image portrayed by the organisation, as working practices differ to a significant extent.

***k) Is a corporate image programme just jargon or good management practice for Durham Constabulary?***

Utopia or chimera? Corporate image consists of a wide variety of approaches, techniques and measures already in existence from various disciplines, designed (sic) to

improve organisational effectiveness. No one appears to have devised a model which pulls the various strands together. There is no common frame of reference or consensus as to which of the various parts of the umbrella expression 'corporate image' are the most influential, effective or impactful. Neither is there a common, standard or consistent language.

There remains much confusion in the terminology of corporate image and corporate identity, (Chapter Two pp. 15-18 ante). The definitions of the terms are unclear and still used interchangeably. Clarification, while sought after, is absent. The design perspective and the design practitioners have added to the confusion by extending their term of 'identity' to include non tangible, cultural and service components of organisations which, more correctly, in the view of the author, concern 'image'. The superficiality of only dealing with the identity aspects of an organisation has been exposed and reported on by many critical commentators:

*"....The 1980's design boom fizzled out when company after company encountered the unpleasant truth that a swish shop interior or smart packaging or a clever new logo or an expensive PR consultant was no compensation for old fashioned research and development leading to original goods or services that people really want to buy...."*

*Pearman (1995) p. 10*

At best a corporate image programme can offer a systematic approach to reviewing an organisation and then, possibly by using the visible, 'identity' elements of the

organisation, act as a signal of, or catalyst to, change. It does not appear to offer utopia, more reasonably it can be offered up as good management practice.

Feasibility and practicality of any programme within Durham Constabulary, in the light of this research, must be regarded crucial. Soft, unspecific messages are not going to influence the strong culture and sub cultures of Durham Constabulary. Following the experiences within the Metropolitan Police of a corporate image programme, (Chapter Four pp. 88-90 ante), the programme if implemented should not be regarded as a 'bolt on' initiative. The corporate image programme may not appear ostensibly cultural - but that is, or should be, its prime concern.

The holistic approach offered by a corporate image programme within Durham Constabulary appears to be its greatest advantage. This is because it can be used across people, systems and procedures under one title. The potential of such a programme is to give direction and momentum - offering a synergy to good management practice.

Perhaps the final words of these conclusions should be left to one respondent of the focus groups. The words best encapsulate the dilemma of what was found in this research within Durham Constabulary, expresses the frustrations found, and identifies the problems which a corporate image programme may assist to address:

*"....We don't know what our goals are. The public and our bosses keep moving the goal posts. In fact it's not that we're not playing on an even,*

*level pitch that causes us the problems - it's the fact that we don't know  
what game we're playing...."*

# **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

## **A reflexive account of the research process**

### **a) Introduction**

This final chapter will make explicit the process by which the data and findings of this research were produced. The reflexive account is important as it is a reconsideration and reflection of the data collection process and the author's role within it. With any research project, only if the means used to produce the findings are known can an assessment be made on the validity or reliability of the work.

Additionally, the chapter will reveal how the work could have been strengthened and possible areas for future investigation are identified.

The central questions of the chapter are therefore concerned with:

- ▶ the role of the research methodology and process; and
- ▶ the role of the author in the process and findings; and
- ▶ possible areas for development and future investigation.

It is hoped that this chapter provides answers to the questions raised by these three issues.

**b) *Focus Groups: a reflexive account of the methodology and process.***

The use of focus groups was an attempt to elicit from individuals their perceptions. Corporate image involves perceptions. Perception may be defined as those processes of acquiring and utilising information that enables people to make sense of and interact with the environment. Cognitive psychologists believe that all processing involves internal representations. Cognitive processes act upon, and are themselves, internal representations of knowledge. These internal representations can be thought of as a person's internalised model of the world. They are built up as a result of transformations of knowledge arising from each person's experiences of the world. While cognitive psychology is interested in the organisation and form of internal representation, it is less concerned about the content of the representation or the impact on behaviour.

The use of groups focused on the content of the individual's internal representations, (in the form of images), and additionally linked these images to possible effects on behaviour. This was done by using the projective technique of annotated drawing, described in Chapter Five (pp. 122-127 ante), and through facilitation - allowing the officer to expand and explore his or her account of the meaning of the representation and its impact. For example: illustration of a pint of beer and packet of cigarettes accompanied by the descriptors '*devious/alien/lazy*'.

Questioning revealed this to be a stereotype held by the officer of a C.I.D. officer. Feelings of jealousy, bitterness and overall negativity regarding the C.I.D. were explored and it was found the officer had little or no direct contact with the Department but believed *'they are all like that'*. This was the 'product' of 14 years police service and was based largely on hearsay and gossip. When questioned about the effect such internal representation of C.I.D. would have on overt behaviour the officer was adamant that there would be no effect on behaviour. The officer was prepared, however, to justify his stereotype to other officers.

This research method studies officers in terms of their own perceptions, motivations and actions. The recording and interpretation of subjective experience and views are problematic in research. Natural science may not acknowledge subjective experience and views as legitimate data. The legitimacy in this case, the author believes, is achieved by what the author terms *'agreement'*.

In the case of the physical world objectivity is unquestioned. But people are different. Everything that we each experience, consciously at least, and everything we do has some meaning for us. This meaning is essentially personal, although shared to some extent with others and even created by our social context. The author has attempted to be objective about subjective data by reaching consensus on what the private images, internal representations and actions mean to the people concerned. At a very basic level this consensus or agreement on subjective representation was reached by asking an obvious question 'Why did you.....?' Self explanations do, however, require further clarification by asking further questions about the images represented but, ultimately, a

person's own reasons for their accounts is sufficient to understand why they held such images or representations. Agreement, therefore, is not an imposition of a scientifically valid research law, but evolved by trying to see the world through the eyes of the subjects themselves. This has been called '*intersubjectivity*' (Shotter 1975).

One of the earliest reviews of focus group research, from a philosophy of science perspective, was undertaken by Calder (1977) who stated that:

*"one of the few real dictums of focus group research is to avoid serial questioning where a number of people are simply being interviewed at once..."*

*p. 355*

During this research a focus group guide and worksheet was used, (Appendices 2 and 3 pp. 394-395 post), with open questions. This, group dynamics, and predictive techniques, ensured that 'serial questioning' was not possible. What was noticeable was that on occasions respondents found it difficult to articulate why they held such images, representations and feelings. The reasons for this could, the author would suggest, be both various and complex. For example:

- ▶ the reasons for the images are only partly available to consciousness
  
- ▶ the respondent may wish to repress the reasons because they are unacceptable to themselves



- ▶ the respondent may wish to repress the reasons from the person asking the question or the audience of the group
- ▶ the reasons may, indeed, be a lie.

In the final analysis what the author did, was to establish as good a relationship as possible with the respondents, involve them in the aims of the research and hope for both truthful accounting and cooperation.

Understanding respondents' perceptions, their feelings and memories, depended on their verbal reports. Despite the fact that sometimes they found difficulty in expression and that sometimes words seemed inadequate, they did, the author believes, accurately represent their subjective experience. For example:

*"...You've summed it up nicely - I'd never thought much about this before...."*

*"...I didn't actually realise that I was so strong in my feelings and views. I suppose I should have sat down and tried to analyse how my feelings come across - they might affect others...very interesting...."*

There were, however, problems in trying to understand respondents' views in terms of ultimately how the views affected their behaviour. Again the respondent and the author had to reach agreement about the meaning of the verbal report, if necessary through quite lengthy negotiation. And this process could generate new meaning as the

respondent reacted to the author. For example, (after an illustration of people in caravans marked 'swag'):

*"....No, I think you've picked me up wrong there. Yes I agree I said that I have a strong dislike for those people. But I think you can read too much into this. Just because I think they are all thieving bastards doesn't mean I'll react any differently to them. I think I'll still be fair...."*

On some occasions this was why the focus group 'sessions' were extended far beyond the time envisaged.

As a generalisation this particular point on agreement and objectivity is both the great strength and weakness of the focus group process. It is important to acknowledge that objectivity may rest on no more than an agreement between the researcher and a single respondent. The more complex the account, the more difficult it becomes to extend the same level of understanding to a wider community of researchers. In practice the author found that the wider the required consensus and agreement about what the respondent meant in the group, the more detail of personal meaning for the respondent was lost.

It appeared, perhaps because the individual felt under 'threat' from the group, or simply so that consensus could be reached in order that the process could move on, that some respondents accepted others interpretations without necessarily agreeing with it. For example: (following an illustration depicting nude civilian staff):

*"...I meant it as a laugh. I didn't think you would all take it so seriously. It was just a throw away. I think you can interpret it in many ways. We should agree to differ on this one I think...."*

The author's explanation for the inability to fully explore the personal meaning behind some of the illustrations and verbal accounts of respondents is firmly psychologically based. It was in fact because of a feeling of discomfort or anxiety on behalf of the respondent. The explanation appears to be that the respondent or perceiver has a set of unconscious assumptions about the world which take the form of internal representations. This provides a frame of reference in which stimulus information in the form of cues is used to make inferences about objects, organisations or indeed the world. The internal representation is, at least in part, the outcome of learning; the acquisition of those assumptions about the world which, by and large, provide the perceiver with the basis for appropriate, to them, inferences.

Information entering the perceptual system is believed to persist briefly in a fairly raw form before being transformed into more abstract representations. The visual store, referred to as the iconic store, denotes that it retains an image or physical analogue of the stimulus. (The concept of iconic store was first introduced by *Sperling 1960*.)

What this particular methodology - the use of projective techniques within the focus group - was exploring was in fact, on some occasions, the respondents' unconscious. This can be an uncomfortable, embarrassing experience and render the respondent

vulnerable. As the purpose of the method was not to develop self awareness of the individual respondents, or to confront attitudes, values and beliefs in a training sense, there was little value in progressing too far with self reports. (This will be further discussed in the next section of this chapter.) It could also, perhaps, have led to alienation either of the respondent or of the author as the researcher. Confirmation of this explanation was received by interviewing several respondents on an individual basis following the focus group sessions. One stated:

*"....I really felt on the spot. I thought everyone was attacking me for what I felt. I didn't volunteer to be interrogated about my personal views but I felt everyone was having a go at me so I just wanted to back off and get out of there...."*

In general these situations were actually rare but, nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that the methodology used here could be anxiety raising for respondents and therefore could affect the collection and validity of the data. The author's personal role in this process is examined later in the chapter.

**c) *Summary of the reflexive account of the methodology and process***

Perception is a process of actively constructing the world on the basis of any information which is available. This active constructive process is often unconscious. People bring unconscious assumptions to the task of perceiving based upon their previous experience. Such assumptions form the perceiver's internal representations.

Throughout the research methodology and process, attempts were made not only to explore the perceptions of the respondents but also to link their perception to possible effects on behaviour. The complexity of personal meaning systems and their association to self direction is a fundamental issue of this type of research. By providing this reflexive account of the methodology and process, together with the next section, it is hoped that the validity of the interpretations has met the criteria of academic and scientific enquiry.

*d) Focus Groups: a reflexive account of the role of the author*

While focus groups formed the primary method of research, the group work was not an entirely homogenous method. In a sense the author was also very much a participant observer. While the general approach adopted was the role of an 'acceptable incompetent', (Lofland 1971), someone who was naïve to the culture of the police organisation and uninfluenced by it, nevertheless the author had a strong awareness that he was part of that same culture, undoubtedly influenced by it, and very much part of the process. Additionally, the author acknowledges that he did not enter this field of research without some guiding principles or with an empty mind. Some knowledge and experience of his previous research in psychology remained with the author. The concepts in psychology could be recognised from an early stage as being topical and relevant to the area of corporate image.

These two factors - being within the organisation and a psychology background - had both advantages and disadvantages.

In the regimented, hierarchical regime that is the police service rank can be a barrier to open communication. During the time of the fieldwork the author held 'officer' status in the rank of Chief Inspector. Interviews can also be a barrier to open and honest communication. The focus groups were not what some authors have termed 'Group Depth Interviews', *Goldman et al (1987)*. Nor were they simply wide ranging discussions, they were focused; and could be better described as conversations with a purpose. The formality of an interview and the rank could have inhibited the respondents. The informality of the projective technique, (Chapter Five pp. 122-127 ante), introduced a 'lighter' note to the process and served on many occasions as the 'icebreaker'.

The environment for the focus groups was a training one. The use of a classroom could have had a formalising effect - but all the respondents were already in fact working on courses within the same training environment. The author was talking to the groups outside of their curriculum and normal class time - to volunteers only. Additionally, the author was qualified both as an 'Evaluator' and a 'Trainer'. Both skills, those of evaluation and facilitation, proved invaluable during the research.

There was also, however, a dilemma for the author. His training, and the whole ethos of current police training, is to address personal attitudes, values and beliefs through student centred learning. This is based on the premise that if a persons attitudes are to

be examined and confronted it is essential that he or she be forced to examine critically and objectively the rationales used to support them. This is often a difficult and delicate process. Confronting attitudes, bias and prejudice was, therefore, not new to the author.

Whereas these issues in the training curriculum were probed and explored to the fullest extent, this could not be the case with the focus groups. The exploration of attitudes, values, belief and perceptions within the focus groups was for an entirely different purpose, had to be in no way confrontational, and had to be done completely confidentially. Focus group facilitation is more a supportive, non judgmental process with great care needed to avoid communicating censure or disapproval. Glib or superficial comments were, nonetheless, addressed as the focus of the discussion had to be maintained.

The role adopted was not didactic, had minimal involvement, and encouraged spontaneity. The 'creation' of this casual and conversational environment for the groups had one disadvantage - there was a tendency for some respondents to go off on tangents, spending time on irrelevant or ancillary topics to the one which was the focus. An evaluation had to be made on whether the issues being discussed were relevant and as, of course, most discussion would be revealing aspects of police culture this was not always immediately apparent or clear cut.

The consideration given to these issues was two fold; one, how important was the 'background' information to culture and image, and secondly whether the interpretations and discussion around the concepts could be validly interpreted by the researcher

without a thorough understanding of the respondents' views and attitudes. While the appreciation of the study goals assisted in having a sharper focus as the group work progressed, nevertheless there were times when the relevance of the topic raised was doubtful. On these occasions it was felt that it was a valid strategy to allow the discussion to develop rather than cut short, prematurely, a potentially important exposition of views.

The one great advantage of the comfortable environment was that profound attitudes often surfaced without the author's intervention. The support provided by the group process permitted respondents to recognise and acknowledge feelings that in other circumstances they may have denied. The use of the projective techniques of drawing and description proved an ideal vehicle to expose attitudes, values and beliefs of the respondents in a non - threatening way. The rationale for this exposition in the context of the research and the authors role within it is now discussed.

There are so many interdependent variables involved in the process of human behaviour that it is virtually impossible to understand them all or to predict accurately how they will impact upon one another. The author's knowledge of the science of psychology provided a base for the interpretations of the data. The science of human behaviour is not, it must be stressed, an exact science. But some aspects of influences on behaviour are known. Attitudes, values and beliefs affect behaviour although the relationship is not a direct one. Some people have the attitude, for example, that their work is boring; yet they work. Some police officers believe that their Sergeants and Inspectors are incapable of supervising and managing; yet they follow instructions. Others feel that their job is a



vocation and deserves their best efforts every day, but nonetheless find themselves coasting in their jobs.

How people behave does have a great deal to do with their attitudes but behaviour is also influenced by many other factors besides attitudes. The classic example of the indirect relationship between attitude and behaviour is the relationship between prejudice, (attitude), and discrimination, (behaviour). Everyone has prejudices, or preconceived notions, about groups of people. As a generalisation, people tend to form attitudes about individuals on the basis of the groups they belong to. In terms of racial prejudice, for example, whites' attitudes about individual blacks are often based on what they think they know about black people in general. For various reasons, however, whites' behaviour towards blacks may not flow directly from their prejudices.

In his study of police-community contacts in large cities conducted in the mid - 1960s for the Presidents Crime Commission in the U.S.A., *Reiss (1971)* found very little evidence of discriminatory behaviour on the part of white police toward black people. However, he did find that the white police officers studied had very prejudicial attitudes towards blacks. Similarly, *Coleman (1986)*, found that the police officers he studied were very prejudiced, but that their attitudes did not often directly translate into brutality or illegal arrests of blacks. The effects of the prejudiced attitudes were more subtle, as officers were more likely to be suspicious of black citizens and less likely to be friendly or respectful toward blacks. This again shows that although attitudes have an important influence on behaviour, the relationship is not as simple or direct as possibly first envisaged.

As previously stated, working in the sensitive areas of personal attitudes, values and beliefs, it may be thought that there would be a reticence on behalf of the respondents in revealing certain information. This proved to be far from the case. While the timing of the focus groups was initially between one to two hours they often took on a life of their own! The interest in the subject appeared to be generated by the fact that the author was providing a vehicle to release tensions, concerns and problems in the workplace - a vehicle which isn't normally afforded. The focus groups actually became talked about within the Force and the author came to realise that he was providing an opportunity for discussion which could later be built upon by management - if they so desired - by forming quality circles or the like.

To return to the role within the research process, from the experience gained from the initial 'pilot' focus groups it was obvious the respondents' perception of the author was as an expert - probably because of briefly showing slides of the subject area. This had two effects. One was that the respondents felt challenged:

*Respondent: "...You knew so much about it and I thought it was so interesting so I didn't really feel I could contribute anything...."*

*Author: Can I just explore that a little further and ask if there were any other reasons why you felt that you couldn't contribute?*

*Respondent: "...I think because I didn't want to make a fool of myself and I wanted to learn more about our culture and image..."*

Secondly mistakenly, at first, there was a reversion to the role of teacher/trainer. This wasn't immediately apparent when involved in the process of the actual focus group, but subsequently, on replaying and analysing the audio tape, the author was noticeably the person speaking for up to 50% of the time. Having identified this as an issue the development from the pilot groups was the introduction of the projective and enabling techniques. Apart from the values of this method previously stated, another was that the respondents were the focus, analysing and discussing their own illustrations to each other. On many occasions the author wasn't even required as a catalyst to the discussion, merely acting as the guide. There was, however, a further possible disadvantage in using training groups for the research.

When people have developed a previous pattern of interacting with one another, there is some likelihood that they will assume these same roles in the focus group discussion. This has an accompanying risk that the individual will speak on behalf of another or even that the whole group will strive for consensus. For this reason none of the focus groups were conducted with respondents that the author was personally training. They were though groups with some established norms and only by using experience as a trainer could an attempt be made to negate the effects of established role positions. It should also be acknowledged that the author was classed as a 'police trainer' and there would be expectations of the role the author would adopt - with possible influences on

behaviour. There did not appear, however, to be any diminishing of candour in response in the groups which were held.

There were also advantages of the author's position as a police officer and trainer. He was able to share the jargon and vocabulary of the respondents and this was particularly valuable in the interpretation of the data. Perhaps more importantly the author's facilitation skills enabled greater depth to be achieved during the group process. For example, if on seeking clarification of the respondents' views it appeared that trite or superficial responses were given clarification was always sought. For example:

*Respondent 1. "....The media always portray us as plods I don't know why you feel its important...."*

*Respondent 2. "....All I'm trying to point out is that they don't always do it. We often get good press...."*

*Respondent 1. "....Not from the Northern Echo...." (laughter)*

*Author        Could I ask you both to give us a couple of examples of what you think were 'good and bad' press and tell me what you think the effect was. Perhaps relatively recently would be best so hat everyone can remember?*

*Respondent 2. "...Yes, locally and I think nationally they (the media) gave us a lot of praise for a new scheme where the specials (Special Constabulary) are supplementing our staffing on beats. It was good because not only did it show the public we still want to give the 'bobby on the beat' it also highlighted to them that our resources are so short we cannot do it ourselves...."*

*Respondent 1. "...But they hurt our image even more by printing stories like 'the second cousin twice removed of the stepson of an uncle who was once a polis for two months in 1950' has been convicted of shoplifting...." (laughter)*

*Author O.K. If we were looking more at what the balance is of the police news in the media what effect, if any, do you think it has?*

*Respondent 2. "...Overall supportive...."*

*Respondent 3. "...Generally we're big news whatever we do. I think the effect is when we do well we get the rewards - when badly they crucify us...."*

*Respondent 2. "...Isn't that only fair?...."*

*Respondent 3. "...Yes...."*

*Respondent 4. "...There's no doubt the media do effect our image - but I've yet to meet anyone who says that 'well the Northern Echo says you're crap so you must be'...."*

*Respondent 1. "...That's not the point. The point is they do have an effect and I'm saying it's negative. Nobody is going to say what they've read is true but they will see us in that light if the messages given out are consistently bad...."*

It was also felt necessary to pursue any apparent contradictions. The principle adopted was that only by probing initial responses can the true meaning of some responses be obtained. Allowing the discussion to develop also makes easier the interpretation of the data as the rationale for views is often uncovered.

*e) Summary of the reflexive account of the role of the author.*

The open and flexible nature of the focus group setting gave great latitude in the way questions were phrased, and equally important, the respondents had the same degree of latitude and flexibility in the way in which they discussed the topic. The author's fundamental belief is that the fact that as was an experienced trainer and evaluator meant that it was possible to guide the group in accordance with the requirements of the analysis and also interpret the responses produced. The data thus produced had much

greater validity than structured interviews. The analysis has also undoubtedly been influenced by the authors psychology background and this is acknowledged. Additionally, being within the organisation assisted in the acceptance of the author, even given the rank differential, and had significant advantages in terms of being able to understand and relate to shared jargon and vocabulary.

*f) Limitations of the work and possible areas for future development*

A key issue for the research was how to facilitate disclosure of internalised opinions of the respondents. While the strengths of predictive techniques in particular and focus groups in general allowed exploration of often unconscious revelation of attitudes, values and beliefs, these qualitative methods could have been supported and developed by quantitative methods. For example, the focus groups were particularly rich in generating hypothesis which were capable of further investigation.

Having reported respondents' perceptions about their own organisation, the influences on their behaviour and the image they project, triangulation, validation or corroboration could have been sought by use of other methods.

Reflected in all the group work, and this was particularly manifest during piloting of individual interviews, (Chapter Five pp. 95-96 ante), many participants had difficulty responding to questions and the author made assumptions that this would have been a similar problem with a questionnaire designed methodology.

There were also several ethical questions and issues surrounding the focus group methodology. In any organisational system based on hierarchy ethical problems may arise based upon the relative 'position' of the author and the respondents in that hierarchy. There were implicit risks of providing information in the focus groups. Providing voluntary consent, confidentiality and privacy, it can be argued, still ignores the fact that the police organisation is a system of compliance, co-ercion and accountability. The rank and role system of Durham Constabulary regulates relationships among individuals and groups. Therefore, the author will have communicated role and rank expectation - regardless of the care and protective strategies adopted by the focus group method. One research method which may have negated some of these ethical issues would have been the use of questionnaires. While the limitations and weaknesses of the method as an appropriate research technique were highlighted in Chapter Five, nevertheless, self administered or postal questionnaires could have increased perceptions of confidentiality and anonymity. Equally, while the focus groups allowed flexibility on the order of questions posed and the facility to clarify and probe responses, there was a greater risk of researcher bias than that present in a validated questionnaire.

Attitudes, values and beliefs, like many other determinants of or influences on behaviour, are abstractions. They also have many attributes. Valid attitude scales, for example, could have been produced for questionnaire use to respondents; even though careful thought and exploration and repeated conceptualisations would have been necessary. The data produced could then have generated issues to be addressed during the focus groups. The attitude scales of questionnaires, as a generalisation, reveal



attitude content that is what the attitude is about. What is not revealed is what is referred to by *Argyle (1994)* as attitude 'intensity,' (*p. 176*), held with greater or lesser vehemence and have variable impact on behaviour. This is not to say that questionnaire technique is incapable of measuring the depth of attitude, value or belief more that greater difficulty is experienced in validating such things as attitude statements and response categories. As *Argyle* states:

*"....Attitude scales are relatively overt measuring instruments.....and we must not expect too much of them. They are not designed to yield subtle insights in individual cases...."* *Argyle (1994) p. 187*

Nevertheless, this research could have been facilitated in this way and could have been enhanced and developed if questionnaire techniques had been used. It is also the case that questionnaires could have further evidenced some of the focus group findings.

Another limitation of the work concerns the chosen sample for the research. The term corporate image embraces all members of an organisation. The literature emphasised the dependence on success of a corporate image programme on those working at a strategic level in the organisation. While the sample used was across functional units and specialisms - and was taken from 97% of the total Durham Constabulary population - it was not representative of those working at a strategic level. It was the author's view that a successful corporate image programme, particularly in a service organisation, relies even more heavily upon the service providers than those at a strategic level. The rationale for this was given at Chapter Five, (pp. 105-109 ante). However, the work

could have been developed further to include the most senior managers who are one of the influences upon organisational behaviour and, therefore, on the corporate image of the organisation.

A further area in which this work could be strengthened or developed in the future is to quantify the effects of the various influences on an organisation's corporate image. While links have been established in this work between various components of corporate image and their effect, causality and extent of the correlations has not been investigated. In a multi faceted model, (Chapter Two p. 20 ante), the factors may be independent or inter-related. While some associations and correlations have been disentangled from the ephemeral concept of corporate image there is no proof of causality. On the basis of the influences identified and associations analysed in this work it is not possible to prove causality. There appears an interactive network of many variables which affect an organisation's corporate image. Further research involving a more complex research design and statistical analysis may tease out the relevant strengths of the influences on corporate image and establish causal links from the network of associations identified.

Additionally, the author concentrated the research on an internal audience. The difficulties this caused in respect of obtaining some of the data concerning external influences on corporate image were acknowledged in Chapter Seven, (p. 161 ante). A further valuable development would be to include external - the general public and other customer perceptions - either by similar focus group work or by quantitative methods.

*g) Conclusions*

This chapter has made explicit the process by which the data and findings of this research were produced and analysed. It is a reconsideration and reflection of the process and the authors role within it. Furthermore, the limitations and possible areas for development of the work have been highlighted. The central questions regarding the above process and role have been addressed throughout the chapter.

While the advantages and disadvantages of process and role have also been described the conclusions are that focus groups, and in particular predictive techniques, were a valuable vehicle to explore perceptions and attitudes of respondents. Moreover, prior knowledge and training in psychology, evaluation and facilitation have assisted in the process. These influences and their possible effects have also been fully explored in the chapter. Finally, the areas for development of the work have been described.

It is felt that this reflection should assist the reader in making any assessment of the validity and reliability of the work.

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## *APPENDICES*

*Appendix One*

Focus group overview

*Appendix Two*

Focus group guide

*Appendix Three*

Focus group worksheet

## **FOCUS GROUP : OVERVIEW**

I'd like to start by introducing myself and briefly give you an idea of the discussion that will follow.

I want us all to have a look at police corporate image. We have, of course many different images - in different situations and to different people. How do these images affect us - if at all?

The discussion will centre around ourselves; how people see us and how we see ourselves; and then perhaps how this may affect the way we work.

A question to start the ball rolling; What do you think our image is?

Brainstorm response on to board or flipchart. We'll discuss these responses later.

Another question: What sort of things determine or affect our image?

Brainstorm responses on to board or flipchart.

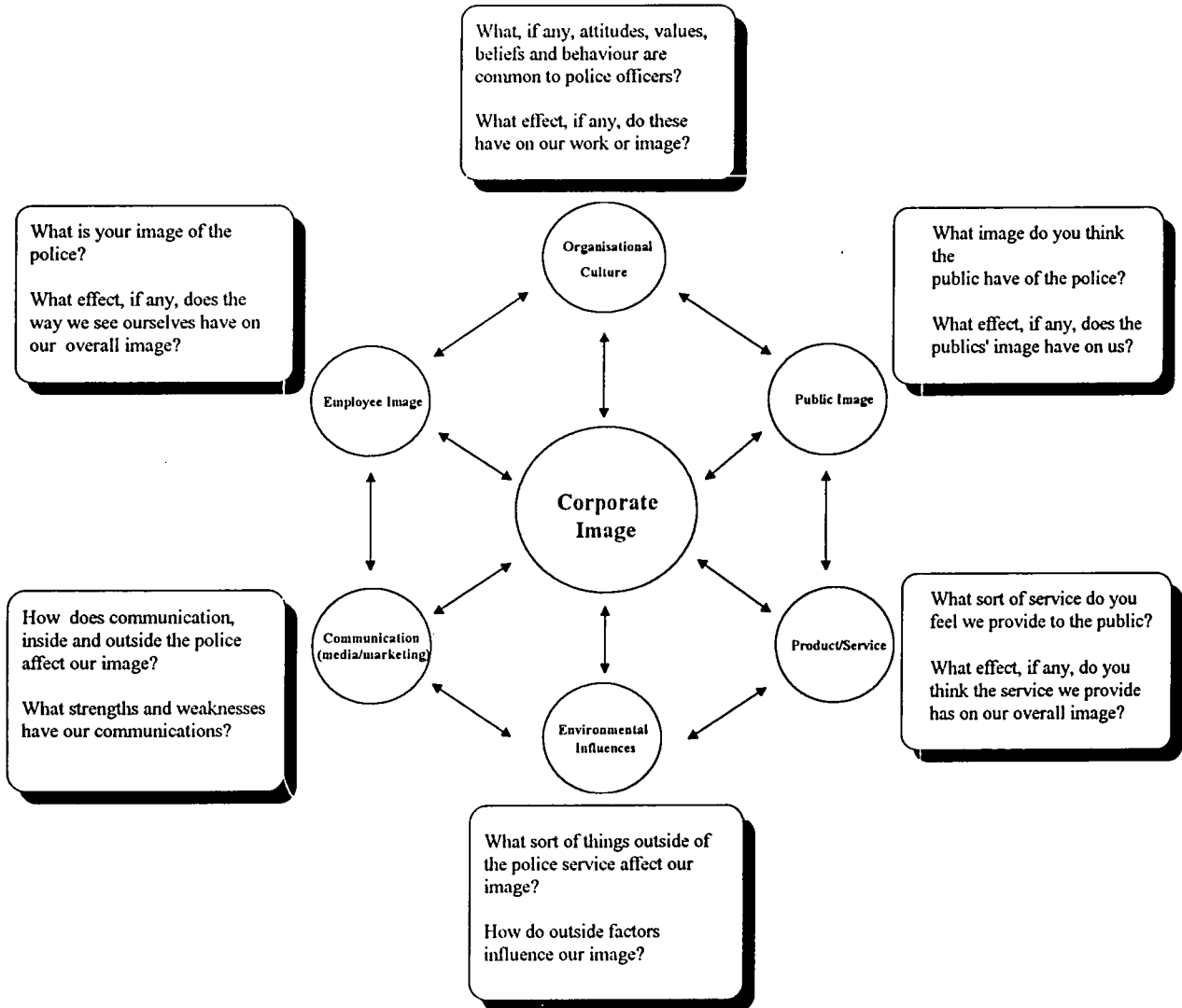
Again this is another area we can cover in the general discussion.

Before we do that what I would like you to do individually is a small task. It's not an exam!

**GO TO FOCUS GROUP: WORKSHEET**



## FOCUS GROUP: GUIDE



## **FOCUS GROUP : WORKSHEET**

Using a large sheet of flip chart paper and some felt tipped pens of various colours, draw a diagram that represents your police shift, section, department or authority. You might like to use the following steps:

### STEP ONE

Think about your own police shift, section, department or authority and find an image or symbol that captures something of the identity of the department. So, for example, you might think of it as a castle, or perhaps it more closely resembles a hive of bees or maybe a pudding. Add as much detail as you wish but do not try too hard or force details that feel contrived. Use your imagination and trust the flashes of intuition. Resist any temptations to edit or tidy up your thoughts. When you have decided or agreed on the image, draw on that section of the sheet that feels appropriate and remember to leave room for the other shifts, departments etc.

### STEP TWO

Think about other shifts, sections, departments or groupings with whom you have important relationships, use the same procedure as step one for each of them, in turn. Pay attention to the proximity or distance between them. Would it make sense for some to be clustered together? Which would be furthest from each other? Are some of them out on their own?

### STEP THREE

When you have done this, add the following details to the diagram:

\*Against each image write down three adjectives that describes them.

\*Indicate in some way which seems appropriate to you, the nature and the quality of the links between the images. For example, you might show how amicable or not, they are towards each other, connecting lines of communication, any barriers which might exist and so on.

### STEP FOUR

For me only. Display some examples of work. Ask whole group to interpret the author to explain.

Whole group discussion: what do the drawings reveal? What effect, if any, will this have on our image?

