

# Organisational Culture and The Fight Against Crime

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There's an old saying which goes: 'Set a thief to catch a thief.' Which, as long as we have police officers, we don't have to do. However, it is good to know how the other side operates.

Charles Handy, the management guru, suggested that there were four different organisational cultures: club culture, role culture, task culture and person culture.

Role culture is found in large bureaucracies, like the civil service, and companies where roles are clearly defined and there is a career ladder, clear seniority and the person matters less than the job description.

Club culture is like a spider's web with a spider in the centre controlling the rewards, which are recognition by the spider.

Task culture is where teams of experts form and reform to do different projects.

Person Culture is found in such professions as lawyers and doctors where the high status professional stars are helped by support staff.

Different parts of organisations can show different cultures. Organised crime groups can be very hierarchical from the family head down to the lowest foot soldier. The head of the family can also behave like the spider in the club culture and reward success or failure with recognition or punishment. Individual members might also act in small teams. Relations between other groups will be at a personal level and they will co-operate in a task culture way.

Crime groups are not clearly defined bureaucracies with strict job descriptions and roles for employees to play. Police organisations are. This means that they are inflexible and have to follow correct procedure, complete lots of paperwork and be overseen by a controlling authority.

Flexible criminal groups are the antithesis of rigid police organisations. Some police forces recognise this and have set up task forces to combat organised crime but they are still not as free to act as criminals are.

In order to increase the ability of police organisations to fight crime we need to develop ways to make police officers and organisations more responsive, flexible and able to operate in a wider jurisdiction than they can now operate in. They need to be able to develop personal contacts and create teams with officers wherever criminals operate, with something approaching the same degree of flexibility that networks of criminals have. Criminals owe loyalty to themselves, not a state and are not limited by geography in the same way as police organisations are.

There are currently two ways that police can most effectively fight criminal networks. One is by risky undercover operations to penetrate the network. The other is by betrayal when either an outside informer (grass or snitch) supplies information to the police or an insider becomes a supergrass and betrays the organisation for their own advantage. Both of these show that the criminal organisation is a very difficult enemy and is one the police will have to adapt to fight.

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**A:** What is 'culture' for you? Use the space provided to give your ideas:

**B:** Where do you come from? Discuss with a partner.

Try to cover these points:

**Nature** – personal characteristics

**Nurture** – early life: family atmosphere, friends, school

**Nationality** – including regional features

**Organisation** – culture of the police force

**Social life** – social groups, sport and entertainment

**C:** Working in pairs or small groups, discuss how you would complete the following sentence:

*'In order to increase the ability of police organisations to fight crime, we need to...'*

**D:** What does the title 'Organisational Culture and the Fight Against Crime' make you think of? What will the text be about?

**E:** Read the article and compare it with your predictions.

## Homework:

Write a short report for your commandant giving recommendations for changes necessary to effectively fight criminal networks.

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## Teacher's Notes

**Summary:** This worksheet will give Sts the stimulus to write a report on recommendations for change within the police force.

## Procedure:

1. Write up on the board '*What is culture for you?*' Elicit and discuss responses in the form of a mind map, spidergram, bullet points etc.
2. Give out a copy of the worksheet and refer Sts to section A. Encourage Sts to note down ideas generated.
3. Refer Sts to section B. It may be necessary to pre-teach *nature vs nurture* (*characteristics inherited at birth vs those shaped by other factors*).  
  
Circulate and listen to discussions.
4. Refer Sts to section C. Allow plenty of time for discussion.
5. Refer Sts to section D. This will encourage Sts to reflect upon their own ideas and predict the content of the text.
6. Hold a short feedback slot before Sts read the text.
7. Sts read the text.
8. Hold a post-reading feedback slot. Were the Sts surprised? How did they react? Were any predictions true?
9. Homework for next lesson.