Explaining cultural differences in a public sector organization: a test of Cultural Theory

Mary Douglas argues that any community comprises four cultural tendencies which she labels fatalism, individualism, hierarchy and egalitarianism. She claims that the relative strength of these cultural tendencies reflects variations in two aspects of social organization, namely, the amounts of social regulation (‘grid’) and social integration (‘group’). Previous research on the public sector has tended to use Cultural Theory to explain administrative practices and ways of organizing government in terms of Douglas’s four cultures. In such instances, culture constitutes the *explanans* while organization is the *explanandum*. By contrast, Douglas saw culture as being the *explanandum* and organization as being the *explananans*. Her key argument is that social organization determines culture. If this claim is untrue then Cultural Theory is invalid. It is therefore vital that this claim be proven. This article will test Douglas’s key claims by seeking answers to two questions: first, do these four cultures exist within any community, and second, does their strength reflect variations in the amounts of grid and group? It will do this by examining data drawn from a large public sector organization, namely, the Australian Public Service (APS). First, it will show that Douglas’s four cultures are present within the APS and that her first claim is therefore valid. Second, it will show that the strength of these four cultures does reflect variations in grid and group but only if grid is defined as social inequality rather than as social regulation. Third, it will show that culture reflects not only variations in grid and group but also variations in ‘power’ or where people are located in order giving hierarchies. Douglas’s Cultural Theory therefore needs to be supplemented with Randall Collins’s Interaction Ritual Theory and Amitai Etzioni’s compliance theory. The APS is the executive arm of the Australian federal government and comprises nineteen portfolio departments and over eighty agencies. With around 160,000 staff it is the single largest employer of wage and salary earners in Australia. 72 per cent of staff are employed in three staff classifications which are ranked in ascending order as follows: APS Levels 1 to 6 (formerly Administrative Service Officers or ASOs), Executive Levels (formerly Senior Officer Grades or SOGs) and the Senior Executive Service (SES).
Douglas endorsed the use of multiple methods in testing her theory. This article uses triangulation as a research method by combining ethnographic, documentary and quantitative data drawn from the following sources: 1. Direct observation conducted during the four years that I spent employed as an APS graduate recruit and clerical administrative officer in two APS agencies (the Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce and the Public Service Board) between 1984 and 1988; 2. Numerous surveys including service wide surveys of APS staff that were conducted in 1975, 1992 and 2004, a survey of Department and Primary Industries and Energy (DPIE) staff that was conducted in 1992, two other departmental staff opinion surveys and a number of surveys of Australian Taxation Office (ATO or ‘Tax’) staff that were conducted between 1987 and 1992; 3. In-depth, semi-structured interviews that I conducted with twenty former and serving APS employees selected by means of snowball and incidental sampling who had worked at various levels ranging from the base grades to the SES within nineteen different agencies and; 4. A variety of secondary sources including the extensive academic literature on the APS, three government reports based on surveys, case studies and interviews, a 93 page document containing 1,314 comments made by 768 people (one third of the respondents to a survey of a representative sample of ATO staff conducted by Jans, McMahon and Frazer-Jans) and six case studies of APS workplaces. The advantage of using triangulation is that each research method has its strengths and weaknesses. By combining them it is possible to capitalise on the strengths of each method while simultaneously compensating for their weaknesses. To strengthen the external validity of my findings I will refer to other studies of organizations including those by Crozier (1964), Kanter (1977), Prandy et al (1982), Bate (1984) and Jackall (1988). My procedure will be to present evidence showing that each of the four cultures that Douglas identifies is present within the APS. I will then seek to ascertain if we can explain variations in the strength of these cultures in terms of variations in grid and group. In the conclusion I will argue that Douglas’s theory needs to be revised to take account of the cultural effects of location in order giving hierarchies as well as the effects of grid and group. I will explore each of the four cultures that Douglas identifies in turn, starting with hierarchy.
Hierarchy

Douglas (2004) argues that hierarchy is based upon ‘authority, precedent, rules, and defined statuses’. It characteristically seeks to limit competition and assumes the authority of stewardship. Its cultural bias supports tradition and order. Bureaucratic organizations possess such a culture since they are structured hierarchically and have formal rules. Collins (2004) for example identifies a ‘bureaucratic personality’ which is marked by a perfunctory, rule-following style. This culture is widespread within the APS. For example, a study of 100 APS middle managers noted that 'rule behaviour is strongly evident' (RCAGA 1976, p. 309). The process of decision making within the APS has likewise historically been strongly procedural, conservative and non-innovative (Matheson 1997; 2000). People in hierarchical cultures defer to authority and value tradition. SES officers for example, adhere very closely to a hierarchical conception of accountability and are attentive to authority (Campbell and Halligan 1992). Caiden (1967, p. 15) described senior APS officials as being a class of 'secure, self-righteous, highly conservative and complacent official mandarins'. Ministers interviewed by Weller and Grattan (1981, pp. 65, 97-9) likewise considered that senior public servants were ‘stodgy and conservative’. Pusey (1991) similarly detected conservative and moralising tendencies in his SES respondents.

Another feature of hierarchy that Douglas identifies is a set of defined statuses, rank order or classification of social positions. For this reason she also labels hierarchy ‘positional’ culture. Jobs in the APS are graded according to salary and status in a set of employment classifications. Location in these classifications corresponds to location in the chain of command. Status is symbolised by privileges such as standard of office accommodation and seating location. Top management normally occupy the highest floor in a building and have the largest offices, senior staff have private offices whereas junior staff are housed in open plan offices. In my department status was symbolised by seating location. Class nines sat near the window, class eights sat adjacent to them, class sixes sat further away while the lowest ranks occupied a windowless
corridor. Such practices ensure that one’s rank is publicly visible. I found that the sense of hierarchy was almost palpable and that public servants were acutely rank conscious. In this respect my workplaces in the APS contrasted markedly with those that I have experienced when working as an academic, which have tended to be much less rank conscious and more collegial.

Another manifestation of the status hierarchy is a sense of ‘knowing one’s place’ in the hierarchy, that is, of being aware of one’s status relative to that of others. For example, it was frowned upon for junior staff in my department who held doctorates to use their title of ‘Dr’ in official correspondence. Such staff would never be addressed as ‘Dr’ by other staff. By contrast, senior staff who held doctorates did use their title in official correspondence and were routinely addressed as ‘Dr’ by other staff. Such a disparity in treatment exists because the use of honorifics such as ‘Dr’ is a symbol of status. A junior staff member who sought to be addressed as ‘Dr’ would be seen by others as seeking to usurp the status that is due only to those of a higher rank. Another manifestation of this sense of knowing one’s place is the informal convention that dress should be appropriate to rank. For example, it would be inappropriate for a low ranking male officer to wear a suit and tie to work but perfectly appropriate, indeed expected, for a high ranking male officer to do so. Douglas (cited in Starkey 1992, pp. 637-38) argues that in a hierarchist culture 'loyalty is rewarded and hierarchy respected: an individual knows his place in a world that is securely bounded and stratified'. Child similarly found a strong sense of hierarchy and of subordinates knowing their place in organizations in Germany while Crozier detected subordination in the various French organizations that he studied (Bate 1984). The APS therefore resembles other large bureaucratic organizations in possessing a strongly hierarchist culture.

One consequence of the status hierarchy is the emergence of the belief that those who are lower in rank are of a lesser worth or value than those who are higher in rank. Douglas (1996, p. 146) argues that ‘This sense of being excluded, disregarded, of being made to feel of no value, is a regular experience in the system of strong grid’. Fuller (2003) has labelled this phenomenon ‘rankism’. He defines it as the practice of dividing people into ‘somebodies’ and ‘nobodies’ on the basis of their organizational rank. Rankism pervades highly stratified organizations such as
the APS. As an informant bluntly observed: 'you are not taken seriously until you are a nine, below a nine you are a nobody'. Whereas junior officers are ‘nobodies’ senior officers are ‘somebodies’. One department head for example, cited with approval the following words from a government report: 'A person who attains a permanent headship has reached the peak of the profession of public administration. His advancement to that status is an acknowledgment of excellence and ought to be seen by the community in that way. He is entitled to the respect and dignity that this achievement deserves...' (cited in Tange 1984, p. 12). Others share this view. For example, a head of Foreign Affairs who was removed from his post by the government rejected the minor ambassadorships that were offered to him in recompense as 'derisory'. Cumes (1988, pp. 113, 115) observes that the offer by the government seemed designed to ensure that the head 'anxious to hang on to such fragments of "dignity" and "status" as he still had, would turn them down'. When Sir John Bunting, the permanent secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, was transferred to the less prestigious post of Head of the Cabinet Office by the Gorton government in 1968, many observers considered that a slight had been inflicted on him and 'were disturbed by the way Bunting had been treated' (Hawker, Smith and Weller 1979, pp.113-114).

Whereas senior officers obtain high levels of deference, junior officers receive very little deference. This is reflected in the disparity in their reported levels of bullying. For example, 18 per cent of ASO 1 to 6 level staff reported that they had experienced bullying or harassment in the previous year compared to only 8 per cent of staff at SES level (APSC 2005). It is also reflected in survey findings which show that SES officers enjoy better social relations with their superiors than the lower ranks do and are more often consulted by them (see DITAC 1992; DOF 1990; TFMI 1992). A junior informant working in a file registry reported that: 'you’d talk to someone over the phone and you're just treated like a dogsbody ... I know that there was one lady that used to ring up and say 'I want this file on my desk' and hang up. We felt like not doing it, when you get commands like that'. Highly educated and older staff can experience a sense of status degradation when ordered to perform menial tasks. One middle aged PhD graduate in my department who was ordered to photocopy documents by his supervisor simply refused outright.
An informant aged in his thirties likewise reported that he had felt demeaned when an SES officer had ordered him to fetch a box of books from the boot of the latter’s car. As a junior officer I felt that I was of lower value or worth than my superiors. This was because they often treated me in an offhand, peremptory or demeaning manner. While superiors may demean their subordinates, subordinates must by contrast defer to their superiors. Maconachie (1993, p. 226) reports that the culture of one APS agency was: ‘male, paternalistic and autocratic. Standards of dress, speech, behaviour and mode of address were imposed, and it was expected that they would be rigidly followed. These rules imposed polite deferential behaviour between staff and superiors’. Staff employed in the Department of Social Security likewise report that until the 1960s they were required to stand up whenever the Director-General entered the room. As one staff member recalls: ‘Nobody ever called the D-G by his Christian name’ (DSS 1987, p. 17).

We may conclude that the culture of hierarchy within the APS derives from two sources: first, the hierarchy of authority and formal rules, and second, the status hierarchy. It is marked by an emphasis on authority, order, tradition, deference and rank. Does this culture reflect variations in the strength of grid and group? APS agencies possess mechanistic organizational structures that are characterised by high specialization, multiple levels of authority and many formal rules (Matheson 1996). Such structures generate high grid since they entail high levels of stratification and regulation. Douglas’s argument that a culture of hierarchy will arise in situations of high grid is therefore supported by the data from the APS. Is hierarchy associated with strong group? The evidence shows that the amount of solidarity experienced by superiors and subordinates within the APS varies markedly in accordance with social distance. Although staff have a moderate level of solidarity with their immediate supervisors, they are estranged from senior management. For example, while 69 per cent of DPIE staff in 1992 had at least a ‘reasonable amount’ of trust and confidence in their immediate supervisor, only 33 per cent of staff expressed the same sentiments about the department’s top management (unpublished data). Hierarchy then does not exhibit a uniformly high level of solidarity but variable levels. The evidence from the APS concerning Douglas’s claim that hierarchy is a product of strong group is therefore equivocal.
Fatalism

The second culture identified by Douglas is fatalism. This culture arises where people experience a high degree of regulation and low degree of social integration. Douglas depicts the outlook of fatalists as being apathetic, cynical and hopeless. They do not believe that it is worth making an effort as it is pointless. Around one third of APS staff display the attitudes of apathy, cynicism and hopelessness that Douglas attributes to fatalists. A large number of my workmates for example were apathetic and lackadaisical. Informants reported likewise. Survey data confirm that a substantial minority of APS staff do not care whether their agency performs well or not and are reluctant to put in effort on its behalf. For example, 31 per cent of staff in the Department of Primary Industries and Energy (DPIE) declined to endorse the statement: 'It's important to me how well DPIE performs' while 37 per cent declined to endorse the statement: ‘I am willing to put in effort to help DPIE’ (unpublished data). Jans, Frazer-Jans and McMahon (1989) found that 30 per cent of ATO staff had low organizational commitment. Those in the 'low commitment' category were 'uncommitted or alienated from the ATO' (Jans and Frazer-Jans 1990b). Low commitment in this instance could be attributed to two factors: junior organizational rank and blocked mobility (Jans, Frazer-Jans and McMahon 1989). Blocked mobility is a major source of fatalism since the possibility of a career and promotion is one of the most important reasons that people give for remaining in the public service (RCAGA 1976). If people perceive that they have little chance of being promoted then one of their main incentives for working is lost. Many of my workmates were in this predicament and accordingly saw no point in working hard. Such people congregated at class eight level since this was a standard career plateau. One informant labelled this the ‘terminal class eight’ syndrome. Complaints about such ‘time serving’ recur constantly in The Tax Office Speaks, a 93 page document that contains 1,314 written comments made by 768 Tax Office staff. The TFMI (1992, p. 188) likewise reports that: 'Staff from all classification levels in regional consultations noted the serious problem of "deadwood" in their agencies...'
One Tax officer has expressed the disillusionment of those who perceive limited opportunity: 'Those that miss out on a career are much more in numbers to those who do make some progress. Overall it causes apathy, low morale - mere existence - and no interest in work or life itself. It's like living in the dark ages, with a chair, a desk and lots of paper around'. Another declares that, 'At this stage of my career, my prospects look very bleak, and with no signs of further improvement, I actually hate coming to work to do the same thing every day' (cited in Jans et al. Appendix 4 1989, p. 40). The term that I used to describe such apathetic and disillusioned workers was the ‘living dead’. An APS officer similarly entitled an article about his work experiences within an APS agency ‘Living death in the social policy section’ (Jordan 1974). An informant observed that: 'People ... that had been there a long time and hadn't got anywhere, appeared to me to be a member of the walking dead. That seems to be what happens to people, they slowly die...' Kanter (1977, p. 146) likewise reports that in the corporation that she studied, low commitment among staff could be attributed to blocked mobility. She notes that disengagement from work was reflected in a withdrawal from responsibility. Such people in the ‘write it off’ stages of their careers were known as ‘mummies’ or ‘zombies’: ‘They walked around doing only what they were told, taking no initiative, and responding only to crises, if then’. An informant described one such subordinate thus: ‘the lights were on but nobody was at home’. As Goffman (1952) observed, employees whose career ambitions have been thwarted will often outwardly accept their loss or disappointment but turn 'sour' on the organization by withdrawing their identification from it and their active collaboration, which may extend to ritual sabotage. Jans, Frazer-Jans and McMahon (1989) found that self-reported work effort and performance among Tax Office staff was primarily determined by organizational commitment which was in turn primarily determined by career satisfaction and job level. Jans and Frazer-Jans (JCPA 1992, Submission No. 29) found that of the five factors that differentiated low and high commitment branches in the Tax Office, three were related to career perceptions. Prandy et al. (1982) likewise discovered that blocked mobility among British white-collar workers was associated with the development of self-estrangement or psychological withdrawal from work.
Fatalists according to Douglas tend to be cynical and pessimistic. They believe that other people are insincere and untrustworthy and that efforts directed towards improving the world are a waste of time. Surveys show that APS staff who have spent ten years or more at the same level are more sceptical about public service reforms than other staff. They are also the least likely of all demographic categories to believe that treatment of individuals is fair, that sufficient effort is made to get the opinions and thinking of workers, that staff are recognised for doing a good job and that they are encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things (MAB-MIAC 1992). Kanter (1977) found that staff with blocked mobility would develop depressed aspirations and were cynical about the fairness of the promotion system. Many would become ‘chronic complainers’ who would criticise the ideas and plans of other people while others were risk averse and reluctant to innovate. Informants reported that people with blocked mobility were often critical of their superiors and of departmental policies. For example, they would allege in conversation with workmates that senior management were stupid and incompetent or produce 'pat lines' which disparaged the worth or value of effort on the grounds that it would ultimately fail. Kanter similarly noted that the 'chronic complainers' tried to appear as 'old hands' who had been through it all before and had lines like: 'We've tried it before and it hasn't worked'. The RCAGA (1976) found that junior officers were far more likely to agree with statements which expressed sceptical or cynical views about promotion (such as: 'there is too much favouritism', 'the good jobs are always taken before you hear of them', and that promotion required 'playing office politics') than were senior officers. Frazer-Jans and Jans (1992) likewise discovered that the belief that promotion and rewards were fair was strongly correlated with organizational seniority. Where individuals feel that they are being treated unfairly, they will often react with anger and bitterness. One submission to the JCPA (1992, No. 42, p. 16) for example, identified the attributes of what it called 'poor performers'. It claimed that they had 'unusually strongly held feelings of bitterness, anger or frustration' and 'will often feel that individuals or "the system" are against them'. A. and N. Korac-Kakabadse (1998) likewise found that many APS staff viewed senior management negatively and made disparaging comments such as ‘keystone cops’.
Another source of fatalism or disengagement lies in the fact that junior staff have limited opportunities to exercise discretion and to display initiative. For example, whereas 81 per cent of SES officers agree that they are 'encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things', only 44 per cent of ASO 1 to 4 staff agree (MAB-MIAC 1992). In the ATO less than 20 per cent of ASO 1-2 staff scored high on a measure of participation in decision making compared to 90 per cent of staff at SES level (Jans and McMahon 1988). Low job involvement among ATO staff can be attributed to two key factors: low skill utilization and low participation in decision making, both of which correlate with junior organizational rank (Jans and McMahon 1988). Where staff cannot make choices or effect changes, they tend to retreat into passivity.

Informants reported that many of their workmates would do only what they were told and would exercise no initiative. Jans, Frazer-Jans and McMahon (1989, p. 32) likewise report that Tax officers: 'tend to be wait to be told to do things rather than using their own resources to solve problems'. We may conclude that fatalism is most prevalent among staff with blocked mobility and staff who work at junior levels. Fatalism is widely regarded as being the most problematic of the four ways of life (Hood 1998). Whereas hierarchies, competition and egalitarianism can be clearly identified as types of organization, the type of organization to which fatalism corresponds is unclear. The data from the APS show that fatalism arises when people are unable to exercise discretion and to obtain recognition for their efforts. In the first instance Douglas’s claim that fatalism stems from high grid is confirmed. In the second instance it is not regulation per se that produces fatalism but the experience of ego loss that stems from blocked mobility. This source of fatalism is not addressed by Douglas. Do fatalists experience low group? In my experience fatalists were not socially isolated. Indeed, most enjoyed the camaraderie that work provided. They were however estranged from their superiors due to the fact that they had been denied promotion. In sum, they exhibited psychological withdrawal from work and social estrangement from their superiors but not from their workmates. The evidence from the APS regarding Douglas’s claim that fatalism is a product of high grid and low group is therefore equivocal.
The third culture that Douglas identifies is individualism or ‘markets’. It arises where people experience low regulation and low social integration. Relationships here are controlled by competition and people pursue their self-interest. Individualism within the APS stems from two sources. The first is the contract of employment in which employees exchange their labour in return for money and other rewards from their employers. Etzioni (1961) argues that the use of material rewards by organizations to control their members fosters ‘calculative’ involvement in which participants desire to maximise personal gain. Most APS staff exhibit such calculative involvement. For example, one survey found that the salary, job security and the possibility of a career and promotion were the most important reasons why people had joined the public service and remained employed there (RCAGA 1976). In such instances people are individualists in so far as their primary motivation for working is self-interest. Jans, Frazer-Jans and McMahon (1989) measured ‘job involvement’ when surveying ATO staff. This incorporated a measure of 'intrinsic motivation' or the desire to perform well in the job for its own sake rather than for the sake of extrinsic rewards. They found that only 24 per cent of ATO staff scored high on job involvement whereas 48 per cent of staff scored low. My workmates likewise exhibited little interest in the intrinsic rewards of work but a great deal of interest in such extrinsic rewards as opportunities for obtaining travel and higher duties allowances and being promoted. Williams (1992, p. 280) likewise reports that ATO staff were attracted to new multi-skilled jobs ‘more by the perceived opportunity to gain advancement by acquiring new skills than by the work itself’.

Reliance on promotion as a staff incentive also fosters calculative involvement since workers balance the prospective rewards and costs of promotion against those of immobility. Informants reported that their workmates were often unwilling to seek promotion because of the additional workload that it would entail. It was folk wisdom among my workmates for example that ASO 6 positions were the most desirable since they were both relatively undemanding and well paid. The importance of self-interest as a motivation has probably increased in recent
decades since the APS has increasingly relied on material incentives such as performance pay to motivate staff. When Pusey (1991) asked SES officers what they saw as worthwhile about their jobs, most nominated private or ego satisfactions ahead of goals that embodied some notion of public service, such as economic management, welfare, social needs and service to the government. Pusey believes that among the SES, the idea of public service as a vocation has been replaced by the notion of work as a personal career. Campbell and Halligan (1992) likewise maintain that the ideal of public service is a less important motivation for SES officers than it once was, given the increased emphasis on material incentives that has occurred since the 1980s.

The second main source of individualism lies in the fact staff must compete against their colleagues when seeking promotion. Such competition undermines solidarity. For example, an informant reported that such rivalries could break up friendships. These rivalries intensify at SES level since the number of potential vacancies declines at senior levels and because ambitious careerists self-select for promotion to the SES. Career rivalries among SES officers intertwine with organizational politics. For example, 60 per cent of SES officers accorded ‘networking’ (defined as '"who you know", internal political awareness, socialising and politicking') a 'high' rating when assessing its importance for obtaining promotion while a further 20 per cent accorded it a moderate value (Jans and Frazer-Jans 1990a). Informants reported that SES officers inhabited a highly political environment. One informant with SES experience summarised the necessary skills thus: 'politically astute, very good judgement and some rat cunning'. These skill requirements resemble those 'Machiavellian' competencies which Kaufmann identified as being typical of successful federal executives in the United States, namely, 'ruthless, aggressive, zealous, a little shady, cunning, calculating and tough' (cited in Uhr 1987, p. 29). ‘Political nous’ was seen by 51 per cent of SES officers as being an important skill requirement of their jobs (Pusey 1991). Many SES officers have attested to the importance of such political skills (see Pusey 1991; Weller and Grattan 1981; Campbell and Halligan 1992; Hyslop 1992; Crisp 1983).

Pusey (1991) discovered that the senior levels of APS departments were riven by political conflicts that arose from personal ambitions and policy differences. Crisp (1975) likewise noted
the presence of intra-departmental politics within the APS. As a department head acknowledges: 'real life necessarily involves at some stages in a career, a readiness to engage in, or even relish for, fierce bureaucratic infighting. Victory over another department is real balm to a public servant's soul' (Henderson 1986, p. 139). One informant reported that he would support his SES patron in the latter’s clashes with his ‘enemies’ within the department. SES officers interviewed by Pusey (1991) and by Jans and Frazer-Jans (1990a) used the term ‘sink or swim’ to describe life at SES level. What they intended to convey by this term was that individuals were on their own in managing their careers and that their social environment was characterised by political turmoil. One SES officer commented that ‘at very senior levels … management is more “ego-oriented” than “company oriented”. This probably results from the need to push oneself to the top in the Public Service rather than it happening from a “manpower plan” or being based on a measured achievement of results’ (quoted in Jans and Frazer-Jans 1990a, p. 24). Those who want to be promoted consequently seek to attract favourable attention from their superiors. A former Director of Studies for the SES noted that within the SES 'advancement is based on individuals outshining each other: at meetings, in writing reports, in minutes' (Bowden quoted in Dawkins 1987, p. 140). As well as advertising one’s strengths, one can also advance one’s career by exposing the weaknesses of rivals. One SES officer (quoted in Campbell and Halligan 1992, p. 183) reported that: 'There's been a fair bit of in-fighting ... right across the bureaucracy ... the scramble for jobs ... trying to look good, I suppose, and trying to make your colleagues look bad ... in the sense that when something goes bad you make sure that other people know about it'.

The sociologist Robert Jackall (1988) depicted precisely such a dog-eat-dog world of individualism in his ethnographic study of American corporate managers entitled Moral Mazes. Jackall depicts a world of intense individualism and rivalry where morality and compassion for others are jettisoned in the quest for personal advantage. Jackall quotes one manager as observing that the normal requirements for friendship are at odds with the demands of managerial work. While such competitive individualism is often seen as confined to the private sector, it also exists in the public sector. This is because public sector employees also compete
for promotion and power. As Kanter (1977) observes, the pursuit of career advancement breeds competitiveness and an instrumental orientation towards relationships. One of my informants, a Treasury SES officer, had read Jackall’s book and was surprised at how closely Jackall’s depiction of American corporate managers resembled his experience of life in the SES. The acme of individualism is encountered at the apex of Australian government among politicians since they inhabit a highly competitive environment. As the former Liberal opposition leader Malcolm Turnbull has observed: ‘Politics is all about climbing the greasy pole. If someone of apparent ability comes into Parliament, they’re not necessarily going to be welcome. They’re thinking, “Is he going to be above me on the greasy pole or worse is he going to pull me down the greasy pole and climb to the top?” It’s a really, really primally competitive business’ (cited in D’Angelo Fisher 2013). Not surprisingly, the former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating is reputed to have advised his fellow politicians that ‘if you want a friend in Canberra, get a dog’.

We may conclude that individualism within the APS arises from two sources: the contract of employment and competition among staff for promotion and power. The former figures more prominently at junior levels whereas the latter figures more prominently at senior levels. As survey data show, salary and opportunities for promotion are stronger incentives for junior staff than they are for senior staff (RCAGA 1976). Senior staff experience a lower degree of peer group solidarity however than junior officers. For example ‘the people you work with’ was seen as being a more important reason for remaining in the public service by junior staff with limited career opportunities than it was by more senior staff with greater career opportunities (RCAGA 1976). Junior staff then are individualists vis-à-vis their employers since they exhibit calculative involvement with work whereas senior staff are individualists vis-à-vis their peers since they compete against them. On balance the culture of individualism is stronger among senior officers than it is among junior officers, since senior officers tend to highly ambitious, self-aggrandising and competitive. We may conclude that the data from the APS supports Douglas’s claim that a culture of individualism will arise where people experience low social integration and low social regulation, since these two features typify market transactions and competitive relationships.
Egalitarianism

The fourth culture is that of egalitarianism or what Douglas also calls enclavism. This culture arises where individuals experience a high level of social integration but a low degree of regulation. In such cases there is no hierarchy to sustain order. Instead, the threat of expulsion from the group is used in order to ensure conformity. The belief systems of such groups are Manichean since they draw a sharp distinction between virtuous insiders and demonic outsiders. Their internal organization is egalitarian and they espouse principles of social justice as part of their protest against social inequality. While the dominant culture of the APS is hierarchal, a ‘counter-culture’ of egalitarianism is also present. Its source lies in the informal relationships that develop among workmates and which generate a sense of peer group solidarity. Students of organizational life have long noted the dual presence within organizations of formal and informal structures. Whereas the former are hierarchical, the latter tend to be egalitarian. This is because people prefer to form friendships with those who have a similar social status to themselves. I found for example that when staff socialised informally at work, they tended to do so with those who worked at the same or adjacent levels. Trade unionism is the institutional embodiment of this egalitarian peer group culture. Unions seek to advance the interests of their members by engaging in collective action against employers. They embrace egalitarian ideals since they protest against the injustices of authority. Their power rests on the solidarity of their members.

Egalitarianism within the APS has been exemplified by the way in which public sector unions have used recruitment and promotion policy to assist disadvantaged or deserving groups in society (Caiden 1965). In Britain, the chief beneficiaries of the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms were the graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, who came to dominate the senior ranks of the civil service. It was to in order to prevent university graduates in Australia from attaining a similar level of dominance that those who designed the recruitment and promotion policies for the new federal public service at the time of Federation sought to maximise career opportunities for non-
graduates (Thompson 1986). They did this by imposing legislative restrictions on graduate recruitment and by ensuring that nearly all recruitment to the APS occurred at the base grades from among school leavers. These policies had their intended effect, since the APS has historically provided a vehicle for upward mobility for lower social classes and for those who have been discriminated against outside, such as Catholics (Caiden 1967). For example, Pusey (1991) found that 27 per cent of the SES had fathers who were in the professional and managerial stratum, whereas the comparable figure for the senior bureaucrats who were surveyed by Aberbach et al. (1981) in their study of five Western European nations and the United States in the early 1970s was 74 per cent. Campbell and Halligan (1992) similarly report that although 15 per cent of the Australian SES have attended prestigious private schools, the comparable figure for senior British civil servants is 42 per cent. Promotion within the APS occurred largely on the basis of seniority rather than on merit. As Encel (1970) observes, reliance on seniority reflects egalitarianism, since it provides everyone with an equal opportunity of advancement.

Thompson (1986) argues that personnel policy within the APS has embodied an egalitarian ‘mythology’. While ostensibly intended to widen opportunity, it has in practice served to exclude ‘outsiders’ from competing with public servants for jobs. As Thompson (1986, p. 42) notes: 'The egalitarian cult had been consistently hostile to outsiders, viewing them as a threat to the "career service" and as introducing people who were inefficient'. Examples of such exclusion include the statutory limitation that was placed on graduate recruitment, the pre-1966 'marriage bar' that prevented married women from remaining in the service and the preference accorded to ex-servicemen in appointment. As Thompson (1986) notes, such practices represented forms of discrimination in favour of male unionists and ex-servicemen that disadvantaged women and youths. The division between insiders and outsiders corresponded to a division between the virtuous and the morally suspect. The public service union in the 1950s for example, cautioned its members to be wary of 'outside appointees, long-hairs, professors, authors, psychologists, advisers and economic witchdoctors' (cited in Thompson 1986, p. 42). Another manifestation of the division between insiders and outsiders is hostility towards strike breakers. An informant
reported for example, that among his regional office workmates there was 'quite a bit of feeling against scabs'. Regional offices tend to have higher levels of unionization since opportunities for promotion here are more restricted. Under these conditions a sharp social divide can emerge between workers and management. One observer noted that in central offices, there was more of a spirit of genuine teamwork and of commitment to and interest in work whereas in regional offices a 'we-versus-they' mentality could be discerned (Lyall cited in Crisp 1975, pp. 192-3).

Douglas used the term 'enclavism' to refer to the cultural tendency for people to withdraw into groups of the like-minded and to demonise outsiders. Many APS staff, especially those at junior levels, display this cultural tendency. Among regional office staff for example there is widespread suspicion and resentment of outsiders, especially those based in Canberra (Selth 1991). Some perceive themselves as being the 'victims' of central office ('Canberra does things to us') (TFMI 1992). Bate (1984) likewise found that the members of three British organizations tended to externalise their problems by blaming 'head office', 'the workers', 'the unions' and 'the Government'. Kanter (1977) observed that among staff with blocked mobility a culture of 'anti-success peer solidarity' could emerge. In such cases workers form closed, close-knit groups that exclude and denigrate the upwardly mobile. Enclavist cultures emphasise sharp external boundaries and exhibit a ritual concern for enemies and pollution. Many of my workmates for example, were suspicious of and hostile towards senior management and other areas in our department. Informants reported that many of their workmates felt likewise.

Survey data confirm these views. For example, whereas 33 per cent of DPIE staff have a 'great deal' of trust and confidence in their immediate supervisor, only 4 per cent express similar confidence in top management. Similarly, whereas 81 per cent of DPIE staff believe that people cooperate to get the job done within their immediate work group, only 33 per cent believe that this is true of people within the department as a whole (unpublished data). A survey of one APS agency discovered that the establishment of differentiated service centres had produced a loss of cohesion with the emergence of 'them and us' attitudes (Maconachie 1993). Selth (1991, p. 53) reports that: 'until recently few regional staff had regular (if any) formal contact with staff of
other Commonwealth agencies ... the other party was seen as being "not as good as us". The territorial imperative was very strong'. Bate (1984) likewise found that a strong sense of territoriality was present in a number of British organizations. This was manifested in a 'them' and 'us' mentality involving conflict and distrust between different organizational sub-sections.

Within enclavist cultures, outsiders are the objects of suspicion and hostility. Surveys show that indigenous staff and those from non-English speaking backgrounds are more likely to report being victims of bullying and harassment than other APS staff (APSC 2005). The enclavist tendency appears to be strongest among junior staff. For example, junior staff in one survey were over twice as likely as senior staff to believe that it was 'easy to make enemies' among their workmates (RCAGA 1976). It is also strong within agencies that have high rates of internal promotion and an adversarial relationship with their clients, such as the Treasury, the Taxation Office and the Customs Service. High group is manifested in strong group conformity pressures. For example, 60 per cent of staff agreed that there was a high level of conformity within the Taxation Office (Jans, Frazer-Jans and McMahon 1989). Internal promotion reflects social exclusiveness and creates social homogeneity while adversarial relationships with clients encourage staff to close ranks against outsiders. For example, an official report into the Customs Service found that it possessed an insular culture that was characterised by intense loyalty to the organization, suspicion of clients and a siege mentality (CRACS 1993). We may conclude that the data from the APS supports Douglas’s claim that egalitarianism stems from high group since it shows that in-group solidarity and out-group hostility among groups of peers will arise in the presence of social boundaries and group conformity pressures. Does egalitarianism stem from low grid? Survey data show that junior officers exercise much lower levels of discretion than senior officers, in other words, they experience stronger grid (RCAGA 1976; Jans and McMahon 1988; MAB-MIAC 1992). Yet junior officers display a stronger level of attachment to egalitarianism than senior officers. Prima facie, this evidence does not support Douglas’s claim that egalitarianism arises from low grid. The following section will address this conundrum.
Grid and group as explanatory variables

We have seen that the four cultures that Douglas identifies are present within the APS. Her claim that a community at any one time is constituted, not by one, but by four distinctive cultural tendencies, is therefore vindicated. She argues that we can explain the presence of these cultures in terms of variations in the amounts of grid and group. Is this claim true? To answer this question we need to ascertain if the strength of these cultures within the APS correlates with variations in the amounts of grid and group. Hierarchy and individualism are strongest at senior levels of the APS whereas egalitarianism and fatalism are strongest at junior levels. Senior officers display a hierarchical culture since they support tradition and order and are loyal to their organization. Douglas’s theory would lead us to expect that they would be subject to stronger regulation (grid) than junior officers. Yet the data show that the amount of regulation within the APS inversely correlates with organizational rank. Senior officers are more likely to participate in establishing goals, to agree that sufficient effort is made to get the opinion and thinking of staff, to be satisfied with their involvement in decisions that affect their work and to agree that changes are made in response to their suggestions, than are junior officers (MAB-MIAC 1992).

In the ATO less than 20 per cent of ASO 1-2 staff scored high on a measure of their participation in decision making compared to 90 per cent of staff at SES level (Jans and McMahon 1988). These data are consistent with research on the British civil service which shows that lower ranking staff exercise less control over their jobs than do higher ranking staff (Marmot 2004). How can we explain the fact that senior officers are hierarchists while junior officers are egalitarians, notwithstanding the fact that they experience low and high amounts of grid respectively? Furthermore, why do senior and junior officers display the seemingly contradictory cultural combinations of individualism-hierarchy and fatalism-egalitarianism respectively?

There are two answers to the former question. The first is that the culture of the senior ranks is not wholly hierarchist; it comprises a mixture of hierarchy and egalitarianism. For example, survey data show that SES officers enjoy better social relations with their superiors
than the lower ranks do and are more often consulted by them (DITAC 1992; DOF 1990; TFMI 1992). SES officers in general do not believe that their organizations are markedly hierarchical (Jans and Frazer-Jans 1990a). Hierarchy in this survey was defined in terms of the level of standardization, whether communication flows were vertical rather than lateral and whether authority was based on position or expertise. Such findings can be explained in terms of the fact that the degree of bureaucratization within organizations inversely correlates with organizational rank (Mintzberg 1979). Perceptions of hierarchy among the SES for example, inversely correlate with rank (Jans and Frazer-Jans, 1990a). At senior levels, organizational structures tend to be organic rather than mechanistic. Accordingly, the culture of senior officers displays elements of both hierarchy and egalitarianism. For example, Pusey (1991) discovered that SES officers comply with their superiors not only because they believe that their superiors possess legitimate authority but also because they have been persuaded by their superiors and because of their regard for their superior’s knowledge and competence. Notwithstanding the fact that they experience comparatively low levels of regulation, senior officers display the attachment to tradition and order, sentiments of loyalty and sense of deference entitlement that typify the culture of hierarchy. Furthermore, it is the junior ranks who experience the highest amounts of grid or regulation who most strongly embrace egalitarianism. How can we explain this paradox?

The answer to this question lies in the fact that what determines one’s cultural outlook is not simply the amount of regulation that one experiences but one’s location vis-à-vis regulation. Senior officers experience less regulation than junior officers but their experience of regulation is different. Whereas senior officers regulate others, junior officers are regulated by others. Collins (1988; 2004) argues that order givers in organization tend to identify with their organization and their official roles since giving order to others provides them with a high level of ego rewards. By contrast, receiving orders from others provides few ego rewards. Order takers consequently do not identify with their roles and their organization. They are oriented away from the order giving hierarchy since this is the sphere in which they suffer ego loss. They accordingly acquire a cynical and fatalistic 'backstage' personality in which they privately criticise power holders.
while outwardly complying with their commands. The same is true of those who fail to move up in a mobility-oriented situation. Collins’s “order takers’ culture” strongly resembles Douglas’s fatalist culture. Both cultures are typified by attitudes of cynicism and apathy. Collins argues that order givers and those with good career prospects exhibit an “order givers’ culture”. In this culture people identify with the organization and its ideals and uphold tradition and law and order. Collins’s order givers’ culture closely resembles Douglas’s hierarchical culture, since power subjects in both instances are loyal to power holders and support tradition and order.

Douglas’s theory can be reconciled with that of Collins since she defined grid in two ways, first, as social regulation and second, as social stratification or inequality. Kahan (2006) refers to grid in the latter sense as the dimension of hierarchy vs. egalitarianism and to group as the dimension of individualism vs. collectivism. Fatalism in this case is therefore ‘individualistic hierarchy’ while hierarchy is ‘collectivist hierarchy’. In both instances we encounter power holders and power subjects who could each conceivably exhibit different cultural outlooks. Fatalism for example, could be interpreted as the outlook of power subjects within individualistic hierarchies. Power holders here, rather than being passive and accepting, would be active and assertive. As Verweij (2011) observes, fatalism involves high levels of stratification and low levels of solidarity. We therefore encounter a struggle among unequals in which high ranked actors will exploit their power and status at the expense of less privileged ones. He therefore denies that fatalism is a form of passivity or resignation since not losing ground in a struggle of all against all is hard work. Power holders here exhibit an attitude of what Verweij calls ‘amoralism’. 6 (2013) similarly observes that within the fatalist cell we can distinguish passive, downtrodden ‘structural serfs’ from the ‘structural despots’ who wield power over them.

If we adopt this interpretation of fatalism then we can understand why it is the most problematic of the four ways of life and why it does not figure as prominently in Cultural Theory as the other three. Fatalism, unlike hierarchy, competition and egalitarianism, is an outlook on life rather than a type of solidarity or organization. To understand fatalism we must recognise that it is the product of a certain type of solidarity or organization, namely, one that involves
coercion, oppression or exploitation. As Coyle (1994) argues, fatalism should be relabelled ‘despotism’. Verweij similarly proposes that fatalism should be relabelled ‘amoralism’. Such a type of organization differs from hierarchy, since it involves low solidarity between power holders and power subjects and sentiments of indifference or antagonism rather than empathy.

In the hierarchist cell we find high levels of stratification in conjunction with high levels of social solidarity. Power subjects here are loyal and deferential to power holders while power holders are benevolent paternalists who reward their subordinates through patronage, approval and promotion. In the case of fatalism, power holders and power subjects display mutual indifference or antagonism whereas in the case of hierarchy, they display mutual concern or affection. In the case of fatalism power subjects exhibit an order takers’ culture whereas in the case of hierarchy, they exhibit what Collins (2004) calls ‘the loyal retainer mentality’. Whereas order takers are alienated from authority, loyal retainers are subservient to it. Collins argues that the loyal retainer mentality characterises long term servants and peasants. In these instances inequalities of power occur in conjunction with high levels of social solidarity. This combination typifies paternalistic authority or what Weber called ‘traditional authority’. In this case power subjects repay the benevolence of power holders with loyalty and respect. The high levels of organizational commitment that are displayed by Japanese workers for example, may be attributable to paternalistic employment practices (Argyle 1993). Such practices in turn reflect the high levels of collectivism that are found in Japanese culture. Whereas Western corporations rely on a competitive system of promotion, large Japanese corporations rely on a system of lifetime employment. Here, payment is linked not to individual efforts but to group performance and seniority and symbolic rewards are as important as monetary ones (Clegg 1992). Ouchi (1981) argues that the higher levels of organizational commitment that are displayed by Japanese workers when compared to their Western counterparts may be attributed to the fact that such practices generate sentiments of group solidarity rather than a mood of personal ambition. Japanese organizations therefore tend to exhibit a mixture of hierarchist and egalitarian cultures rather than the fatalist and individualist cultures that are found in Western organizations.
The reason why the loyal retainer mentality exists is because social solidarity between superiors and subordinates ameliorates the alienating effects of order taking. For example, while 69 per cent of DPIE staff in 1992 had at least a 'reasonable amount' of trust and confidence in their immediate supervisor, only 33 per cent of staff felt likewise in the case of the department's top management. The explanation for this difference in outlooks lies in the fact that staff have a great deal of social contact with their immediate supervisors but very little contact with top management. For example, only 24 per cent of staff believed that staff and management in DPIE had a good working relationship and only 29 per cent believed that senior management was aware of problems at their level (unpublished data). Within the ATO likewise: 'To most staff, "management" were those men in dark suits who were "up there" - usually meaning isolated from the rest of the organization in their executive offices on the higher floors of a building' (JCPA 1992, Submission No. 75, p. 14). Jans, Frazer-Jans and McMahon (1989, p. 22) report that within the ATO: 'most managers are organizationally and socially remote from those whom they manage'. This remoteness is exacerbated by the fact that bureaucratic organizations are typified by 'transactional' rather than 'transformational' leadership. Whereas the former involves an impersonal exchange of tangible rewards that generates alienation, the latter is charismatic and involves an exchange of intangible rewards in which individualized consideration is given to followers’ needs (Sarros et al 2002). For example, Jans and Frazer-Jans (1990a, p. 36) found that SES officers lacked a strong 'staff orientation', that is, they did not see staff as having 'ideas and skills which are useful and which should be actively sought, used and rewarded'. Managers in such instances are indifferent towards their subordinates rather than solicitous. Power subjects in bureaucratic organizations accordingly tend to display an order takers’ culture (fatalism) whereas those in patrimonial and charismatic organizations display a loyal retainer mentality (hierarchy).

Survey data from the APS confirm Collins’s argument that location in the order giving hierarchy and chances of upward mobility shapes peoples’ cultural outlook (Jans and McMahon 1988; Jans, Frazer-Jans and McMahon 1989; DOF 1990; MAB/MIAC 1992; DITAC 1992). Organizational rank and favourable career perceptions for example, strongly correlate with
organizational commitment (DITAC 1992; DOF 1990; Jans and McMahon 1988; Jans, Frazer-Jans and McMahon 1989). Surveys show that the SES have a sanguine view of the public sector reforms over which they preside whereas the lower ranks are much more sceptical (MAB-MIAC 1992). My workmates were likewise sceptical about official statements. These data confirm Collins’s argument that order givers identify with their organization whereas order takers are alienated from it. Jans, Frazer-Jans and McMahon (1989, p. 36) report that: 'Almost all the SES see that Tax is a well-run organization, which cares for its staff and a place where morale is high; but only about two-thirds of all other Tax staff share this perception'. One survey discovered that hierarchical classification was the demographic variable which was most likely to yield varying responses (other variables included length of experience, type of agency and gender). Indeed, variations in responses by staff were almost invariably linked with this variable (MAB-MIAC 1992). Even within the SES there are marked cultural differences based on hierarchical location (Jans and Frazer-Jans 1990a). Pusey (1991, p. 131) reports that ‘these differences between [SES] officers at different levels are in fact so marked that one can usually guess the level of the officer very quickly from the way they talk, without other clues or foreknowledge of their position’.

To explain cultural differences then we need to pay attention not only to grid and group but also to ‘power’ or peoples’ location in the order giving hierarchy and their chances of upward mobility therein. Both despotism and hierarchy bear the imprint of power since they involve social inequality. Egalitarianism indirectly bears its imprint, since both it and fatalism are ways in which power subjects within despotism adapt to ego loss. Kanter identified fatalism as ‘disengagement’. This comprised depressed aspirations, low commitment and non-responsibility. Egalitarianism she identified as ‘anti-success peer solidarity’. She argued that both types of behaviour constitute responses to a lack of career opportunities. Fatalists respond to this through psychological withdrawal whereas egalitarians respond to it by seeking ego rewards from their peers rather than from their superiors. Kanter (1977) observed that staff with low opportunity tended to substitute 'social' for organisational recognition and to thereby become 'social professionals'. Among such people, peer group solidarity is a key virtue. For example, a survey
of APS staff found that 'the people you work with' was more important as a reason for remaining in the public service for fourth division officers, who had limited career opportunities, than it was for third division officers, who enjoyed much better career prospects (RCAGA 1976). From the late 1980s onwards a process of workplace restructuring sought to upgrade the skills of junior APS staff and to increase their career opportunities. This process jeopardised the peer group solidarities that had developed among such workers. For example, Tucker (1992, p. 11) reports that the Data Processing Operators (DPO's) who performed routine jobs in one APS agency enjoyed the 'happy social atmosphere' of the pool and that many were fearful that the 'depooling' associated with workplace restructuring would lead to a loss of social support. She cites the case of 'one tightly knit group of three who would go anywhere, but together' and reports that some DPO's even volunteered to 'give back' their 4 per cent pay rise so as to remain in the pool.

Power subjects who obtain ego rewards from their superiors, such as the upwardly mobile, exhibit the 'loyal retainer mentality'. Power subjects who fail to obtain such rewards are fatalists or what Collins calls 'order takers'. Order takers experience a loss of what Collins calls 'emotional energy'. As a result they exhibit depression, distrust and fear. These emotions are typical of fatalists. Fatalism therefore stems from the experience of ego loss. Collins argues that order takers exhibit what Etzioni (1961) calls 'alienative' involvement. Etzioni argues that alienative involvement arises among those who are subject to coercive control. Power subjects here will react by resistance if possible; next, by avoiding the coercing situation and finally, lacking other alternatives, by dull, minimal compliance. The last mentioned of these responses is what Kanter calls 'disengagement' and what Douglas calls 'fatalism'. Fatalism is therefore only one of three alternative responses to coercion. Etzioni contrasts alienative involvement with both the 'calculative' involvement that is yielded by utilitarian control and with the 'normative' involvement that is yielded by symbolic control. Utilitarian control corresponds to Douglas’s individualist culture while symbolic control corresponds to both hierarchy and egalitarianism.

Why do senior and junior officers display the contradictory cultural outlooks of hierarchy-individualism and fatalism-egalitarianism respectively? Douglas (2004) argues that the
four cultures are tendencies or biases rather than separate cultures. People can therefore exhibit multiple cultures. This is because they encounter different combinations of grid and group when interacting with people in different contexts. Thus one could be a fatalist when encountering an overbearing boss but an egalitarian when dealing with a friendly workmate. Similarly one could be a hierarchist when obeying a respected superior but an individualist when competing against a feared rival. While people exhibit multiple cultural tendencies, the relative strength of such tendencies varies since people more frequently experience some combinations of grid and group than they do others. Furthermore, they occupy different locations in order giving hierarchies within the despotic and hierarchical cultures and obtain different levels of ego rewards from the various grid-group combinations. They accordingly exhibit different cultural preferences. Order takers tend to display both fatalism and egalitarianism since those who suffer ego loss when taking orders or experiencing blocked mobility seek ego rewards from their peers. Order givers exhibit both hierarchy and individualism since they are loyal to their benefactors but have to compete against rivals among their peers to climb the career ladder and to maintain their power.

We may conclude that culture is shaped by three factors rather than two: the extent of inequality in social relationships (grid), the extent of social solidarity (group) and location in order giving hierarchies and one’s chances of upward mobility therein (power). To understand cultural differences we therefore need to combine Douglas’s Cultural Theory with Collins’s Interaction Ritual Theory and Etzioni’s compliance theory. Figure 1 depicts where the various cultures and compliance outcomes that are identified by Collins and Etzioni are located on Douglas’s grid-group diagram. The two upper cells of the diagram comprise situations of social inequality whereas the two lower cells comprise situations of social equality. In the former case power holders and power subjects display different cultural outlooks. In the case of despotism power holders display either amoralism or indifference whereas power subjects exhibit fatalism, resistance or avoidance, depending on their circumstances. In the case of hierarchy power holders display a paternalist outlook whereas power subjects exhibit a loyal retainer mentality.
Conclusion

This paper has argued that the APS displays the four cultural tendencies that Douglas identifies and that they are determined by variations in the levels of grid and group, as she proposes. It argued however that grid should be interpreted as the extent of social inequality rather than as the extent of social regulation. In addition to grid and group, it argued that peoples’ location in the order giving hierarchy or expectations of becoming an order giver (‘power’) also shapes culture. Power is an explanatory factor only in those instances where social inequality or high grid exists, namely, within the despotic and hierarchical cultures. What Douglas calls fatalism is more accurately described as ‘despotism’ (Coyle, 1994). Both despotism and hierarchy involve power relationships. In the former case these comprise coercion, exploitation and impersonal bureaucratic command whereas in the latter case they comprise legitimate power and paternalistic authority. As 6 (2013) observes, hierarchy is not command or coercion, but membership of a community of unequals in a context of legitimate authority. If we interpret fatalism as being the culture of order takers who are subject to despotism, then the reason why it has been the most problematic of the four cultures becomes understandable, since it has been seen as being a purely ‘passive’ culture. In fact, it comprises both active and passive cultural outlooks. The former is exhibited by power holders towards power subjects and can range from simple indifference to outright hostility. Likewise, the attitudes of power subjects in this instance towards power holders can range from resigned acceptance to bitter antagonism. By drawing on Collins’s Interaction Ritual Theory and Etzioni’s compliance theory we can explain why the cultural outlooks of order givers and order takers differ and how different organizational control methods give rise to different compliance outcomes or cultural outlooks among their members.

Lockwood (1966) and Mann (1973) have each identified a number of typical forms of class consciousness or orientations to work that are displayed by workers and these closely resemble the cultures that have been identified here. Lockwood identifies three ideal types of workers: the privatised, deferential and solidaristic. He argues that each of these attitudes or
orientations corresponds to a particular social situation. Privatised workers focus upon obtaining material rewards from their work and are individualists who feel neither moral commitment nor antagonism towards their employers. Deferential workers are encountered in paternalistic work environments and see themselves as occupying a junior location in a status hierarchy. Proletarian workers inhabit occupational communities with a high level of social solidarity and exhibit an ethos of fraternity and comradeship. They perceive the class structure to be one based on power or conflict and a division between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Lockwood’s privatised, deferential and proletarian workers correspond to the individualistic, hierarchical and egalitarian cultures respectively. Mann (1973) similarly distinguishes a number of attitudes to authority on the part of workers. He argues that most members of the working class accept authority on a pragmatic basis that is devoid of both normative involvement and opposition. He calls this ‘pragmatic acceptance’. Mann argues that this attitude is often found in conjunction with a sense of fatalism and that the latter is the most frequent defence mechanism among workers who experience deprivation. He contrasts such pragmatic acceptance with both the sense of normative commitment found among ‘deferential’ workers who inhabit paternalistic work environments and with the ‘revolutionary consciousness’ of those workers who seek to overthrow authority. Pragmatic acceptance and deference typify the responses of power subjects in the cases of fatalism and hierarchy respectively. Revolutionary consciousness typifies both those power subjects who resist despotism rather than accept it pragmatically and those who seek to overthrow it in favour of an egalitarian social order. It therefore corresponds to both ‘resistance’ and egalitarianism. Mann argues that workers and trade unions who focus upon obtaining material rewards from employers rather than upon broader social objectives exhibit an attitude of ‘economism’. This corresponds to individualism and to Lockwood’s privatised worker. We may conclude that the four cultures that are identified by Douglas are present not only among APS staff but also in the wider labour force. Furthermore, the social environments from which these cultures arise display the particular combinations of grid (social inequality) and group (social solidarity) that the interpretation of her theory that this paper proposes would lead us to predict.
What implications does the interpretation of Cultural Theory that has been proposed here have for the study of public administration? The main implication is that fatalism is not the best term to describe the way of life that is located in the upper left cell of the grid-group diagram. A more accurate term is ‘despotism’. It is only the power subjects within this cell who are fatalists. The power holders here exhibit a different cultural outlook, namely, one of either ‘amoralism’ or ‘indifference’. The former typifies coercive and exploitative relationships whereas the latter typifies bureaucratic authority. Douglas claims that fatalism is not only a cultural outlook but also a type of organization. The type of organization to which fatalism as a culture corresponds however is unclear. By redefining fatalism as despotism we can clearly specify its corresponding type of organization, namely, one that combines low social solidarity with high social inequality. Examples include bureaucratic organizations and what Etzioni (1961) calls ‘coercive organizations’. We may contrast such impersonal forms of power with the ‘personal’ forms of power that typify hierarchy. The prime examples are Weber’s categories of traditional and charismatic authority. The APS exhibits both despotism and hierarchy since managers and their subordinates experience differing amounts of social solidarity. Jackall (1988) likewise notes that corporations combine bureaucratic and patrimonial authority. We may link Douglas’s four cultures to their corresponding types of organization as follows: Despotism (coercion and bureaucracy), Hierarchy (traditional and charismatic authority), Individualism (markets and competition) and Egalitarianism (cooperation and networks). Douglas uses the term ‘hierarchy’ to refer to bureaucratic, traditional and charismatic authority whereas this article proposes that it should refer only to the last two of these. Each of these four cultures corresponds to particular tools of government. In the case of despotism these tools comprise coercion, violence, oversight, planning, regulation, law and bureaucracy whereas in the case of hierarchy they comprise patronage, indoctrination, symbolic rewards, ritual, leadership, tradition and charisma. Given that the main task of most states throughout history has been to wage war and that a monopoly of the legitimate use of violence is the defining characteristic of a state, it is vital that any theory of public administration and public policy should account for violence as a tool of government.
Cultural Theory does not currently do this. While hierarchy (an army), individualism (mercenaries) and egalitarianism (a ‘band of brothers’) are ways of organizing violence, violence itself does not correspond to any of the four ways of life. Those who are subject to violence, such as slaves and soldiers in wartime, often exhibit a fatalistic outlook. Violence itself however is not fatalism. Rather fatalism is a product of violence. We can incorporate violence into Cultural Theory by categorising it as a sub-type of despotism. Violence involves high inequality and low solidarity since it typically aims at subduing another person through inflicting injury or death on them, usually in a situation where peoples’ interests conflict. For example, Clausewitz (1976, p.1) defined war as ‘an act of violence designed to constrain the adversary to execute our will’. Violence is an important tool of government and is most clearly exemplified by war making and the exercise of police powers. As the Syrian civil war shows, it is possible for a government to wage war on its own people. To describe this relationship as one of hierarchy would clearly be inaccurate, as the relationship between the government and the people in this instance is not characterised by high solidarity. Instead, the government treats the people (or at least some of them) as the enemy. Violence typically forms part of a strategy of coercion. According to Etzioni and Collins, people should react to coercion in one of three ways: by resistance, avoidance or dull, minimal compliance. In the case of the Syrian civil war we can see all three of these reactions: some citizens have taken up arms against the government, many have fled the country while those non-combatants who remain try to keep out of harm’s way and to appease the belligerents. The use of violence as a tool of government can be distinguished from the exercise of legitimate authority in which power subjects accept the right of power holders to demand obedience from them and willingly obey their commands. Violence and hierarchy lie at opposite poles of a continuum of relationships. Bureaucratic authority falls roughly mid-way between them and accordingly possesses some of the attributes of both. It resembles violence in being impersonal but resembles hierarchy in possessing legitimacy. We therefore need to recast Douglas’s grid-group framework so that these different types of social relationships and cultures together with their corresponding tools of government can be located within it (see Figure 1).
Bibliography


Figure 1: A reinterpretation of Mary Douglas’s Cultural Theory

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