

CHANGING “THE WAY WE DO THINGS”
PRESENTING A STRATEGIC ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE FRAMEWORK

A Thesis

Presented to the faculty of the Department of Public Policy & Administration
California State University, Sacramento

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY & ADMINISTRATION

by

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SPRING
2012

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Abstract
of
CHANGING “THE WAY WE DO THINGS”
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Sarah Michele Divan

Dynamic environments characterized by technological, economic, and political change increasingly requires organizational agility among California’s public organizations. Perhaps a primary indicator of this need is the growing inventory and increased use of management tools like strategic planning, total quality management, and reengineering that assist administrators in creating strategic, long-term, and outcome-oriented approaches to problem solving. While these management tools are useful, and in most circumstances appropriate to effectively manage an agency, administrative management literature points to the importance of organizational culture as a powerful force influencing agency behaviors. Commissioned by Yolo County’s Administrative Officer, the purpose of this conceptual thesis is to identify organizational culture characteristics that are more conducive to institutionalizing strategic-thinking beyond efforts of individual initiative champions or change processes.

By conducting an extensive analysis of existing values-based and process-based research, similarities of the characteristics associated with strategic organizations emerge. After reviewing

these similarities this thesis identifies six components essential for developing a strategic organizational culture that includes leadership, mission-driven, systems thinking, feedback loop, personnel development, and change champions. This Strategic Culture Framework marries value-based characteristics with change-drivers to create a proactive model administrators can use to reshape the underlying values that govern decision-making processes and influence individual and group ability to develop solutions within organizations. Finally, this thesis concludes with a discussion of momentum building, practical change processes, and potential barriers to change in order to prepare administrators for redirecting existing organizational values towards tenants of the Strategic Culture Framework.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“For from Him and through Him and for Him are all things. To Him be the glory”—Romans 11:36

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my amazing family (and the Warner clan) whose unconditional support and encouragement enabled my completion of this project and degree program. My dad always said, “You can do anything you put my mind to” and he, my mom, and my two sisters have yet to stop reminding me of that fact. I am truly blessed to have such a loving family who is always in my corner. Secondly, I would like to thank my kindred spirit and beautiful best friend Barb who is one of my many personal cheerleaders. She served as a living testimony that completing a thesis is possible. Combined, these individuals preserved my sanity and I am forever indebted.

I must also thank Mary Kirlin, my professor, advisor, and mentor who has exposed and shaped my academic interests. Not only did she survive my many office visits, emails, and phone calls these past two years but her career guidance also provided a critical link that has shaped and invigorated my professional endeavors. Thanks are also extended to David Booher for his support of this project. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge Yolo County and Patrick Blacklock who served as the primary inspiration for this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

California, the world's eighth largest economy, faces serious and significant challenges. Not only is the state entrenched in crippling budget problems but the region must confront an aging infrastructure, a diversifying population, a growing unskilled and undereducated workforce, a struggling K-12 educational system, and an unfriendly business climate. Critical to the aforementioned topics are county governments, who face unique institutional dilemmas as they strive to fulfill dual roles in a rapidly evolving external climate. On the one hand, they provide municipal services like roads, parks, libraries and public safety. In concert with these municipal responsibilities, counties act as the state's delivery arm for services like foster care, health care, and jails. Furthermore, county administrators are placed in the challenging position of implementing policy and providing mandated services with limited ability to participate in policy formulation (the responsibility of state legislators). Finally, local governments also experience restricted and categorical revenue sources coupled with state mandated service requirements that limit budgetary flexibility.

In light of these challenges and the current economic recession, there is growing pressure for local jurisdictions to demonstrate increased effectiveness and efficiency while adapting to changing service demands. Additionally, the dynamic environments characterized by technological, economic, and political change increasingly requires organizational agility. Perhaps a primary indicator of these needs are the growing inventory and increased use of management tools in counties coupled with the long history of attempts to improve organizational functioning in both the private and public sectors (Poister and Strieb, 1994; Cameron & Quinn, 2011). While planned change strategies like reengineering, total quality management, strategic planning, and downsizing are appropriate to more effectively manage an agency, they have an

alarming failure rate and are often unable to gain sustained traction beyond the tenure of a motivated leader who initiated the process (*ibid*). The purpose of this thesis is to identify organizational culture characteristics that are more conducive to supporting an agile and strategic agency; it is an exploration of the more abstract and underlying values existing within agencies that influence overall organizational behaviors, processes, and decision-making.

THESIS COMMISSIONING

This thesis was originally commissioned by the Administrative Officer of Yolo County, Patrick Blacklock, for the purposes of identifying best practices for institutionalizing strategic planning within public organizations. Past planning efforts intended to produce long-term organizational change have not had lasting results. Furthermore, attempts to reframe county values resulted in an identity crisis with some members subscribing to a “do right by people” mantra and other adopting “S.P.I.R.I.T” values (an acronym standing for service, performance, integrity, responsibility, innovation, and teamwork). With a new executive at the helm, county leadership is currently in the process of reestablishing a three-year strategic plan and they are interested in ensuring improvement efforts not only succeed in creating systemic changes capable of outliving any individual champions but also produce a more strategic, agile organization to meet the changing nature of service demands.

After reviewing a voluminous body of literature, it became evident that the County would be better served by a report describing the elements of organizational culture that can fortify the objectives of management tools like strategic planning. Concepts of commitment, strategic thinking, and innovation relate more directly to constructs of the organizational values and assumptions associated with organizational culture, rather than any one planning process.

Ultimately, this project recommends to county leadership a strategic culture framework that clarifies the characteristics an organization can build into (if not present already) their underlying and agency-wide values structure—a framework that will institutionalize strategic-thinking and generate a natural momentum to sustain process-based improvements. While the information presented can be broadly applied to other similar organizations, the identified culture characteristics detailed in later chapters have been selected with specific consideration for Yolo County. Due to the jurisdiction’s interest in this subject, the agency will also be used as an example to support the introduced culture framework when applicable.

WHY ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE?

The topic of organizational culture has become somewhat of a fad among researchers and practitioners alike; however, unlike most fads, the intangible and underlying values driving agency behaviors do not simply disappear over time. Some suggest culture is the single factor distinguishing top performing organizations from mediocre agencies (Meehan, *et al.*, 2008). In a worldwide survey conducted by Bain & Company on management tools, 91% of 1,200 senior executives agreed that culture change is a critical strategy for achieving successful outcomes (*ibid*). Additionally, 81% of respondents agreed that absent a “winning” culture, a company is doomed to failure (*ibid*). Ultimately, culture is what provides agency members a common ground for interpreting events, understanding issues, and knowing what is expected of them (Denning, 2010). Representing an interlocking set of goals, values, attitudes, and operating assumptions, cultural forces can combine to prevent change attempts (*ibid*). Consequently, applying management tools, like strategic planning, without understanding cultural drivers of agency behaviors will only result in temporary changes and individuals are likely to revert to stagnant patterns of decision-making. Although difficult to redirect, cultures can be made more

performance enhancing—a necessary strategy for developing more adaptive and responsive organizations given the existing challenges facing California’s counties (Kotter, 2001).

EXAMPLES OF DYSFUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

According to Balthazard, Cooke, and Potter (2006), dysfunctional organizations are characterized by lower effectiveness, efficiency, and performance relative to equivalent agency counterparts. Culture can have a profound impact on an organization. On the one hand, leadership strategies, styles, and skills can communicate that collaboration, cross-agency feedback, and strategic learning is valued; thereby, producing and reinforcing a more constructive culture striving for continual improvement. On the other hand, an organizational culture can support passivity, aggression, and defensive behaviors that are detrimental to an agency (*ibid*). The following examples demonstrate the effects of dysfunctional agency culture.

Responsible for the nation’s space program and aeronautics research, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) core functions require balancing innovation and risk-taking with safety and controlled outcomes. On January 28, 1986, the world watched as the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded just seconds after launching over Florida’s coast (CNN.com, 1996). Seven years later, similar devastation was experienced as the Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrated upon reentry (National Geographic News, 2003). A nine-year study of NASA’s internal operations and procedures revealed that in both instances, specialized personnel did discuss critical information indicating significant flight risks; however, that information was not adequately communicated to senior decision makers and those same decision makers were unwilling to internalize the warning messages that were delivered (Balthazard, *et al.*, 2006). While an immediate reaction to the disastrous events was to identify individual blame, analysis revealed both incidents were not due to intentional misconduct. Instead, NASA’s organizational

culture allowed for processes that desensitized signals of danger and reinforced risky-outcomes (Vaughan, 1996; Balthazard, *et al*, 2006). Conformity to norms institutionalized tunnel vision and prevented the presentation of evidence that conflicted with or jeopardized desired outcomes, which ultimately led to the fatal errors.

A second example of dysfunctional organizational culture revolves around the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Considered the largest accidental marine oil spill in the petroleum industry's history, this catastrophe resulted in loss of human life, marine, life, and wildlife habitats across thousands of square miles (Telegraph Press, 2010). Like the NASA incidents, the oil spill exposed an organizational culture that supported extreme risk taking, ignored expert feedback, hid facts indicating agency errors, and overlooked signs that were contradictory to embraced mental models (Corkindale, 2010). Additionally, governmental emergency response agencies and political officials not only underestimated the level of aid required but also were unable to respond with haste, which could have mitigated the severity of the event's consequences (*ibid*).

While dramatic, both examples demonstrate how ingrained patterns of thinking and behavioral norms influence an agency's ability to respond effectively to changing and unexpected situations. In both cases, key leaders reinforced personal mental models that prevented the dissemination of information contradictory to a desired outcome. While individual personnel may have attempted to question operating standards, the feedback was not accepted. Finally, both examples resulted in several studies recommending cultural modifications as a critical solution to remedying organizational inadequacies in the long-run.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS THESIS

After revealing the powerful influence of culture on organizational effectiveness and the detrimental outcomes of dysfunctional culture, this thesis examines dominant characteristics prevalent in more strategic-oriented agencies in order to construct a specialized culture type equipping organizations to thrive in dynamic environments, accommodate rapidly changing demands, and institutionalize process-based improvement initiatives. Chapter 2 reviews the body of literature pertaining to organizational culture, leadership, organizational development, and strategic planning to build an understanding of the topic. Additionally, similarities across each of the disciplines are identified. By blending both values-based and process-based research, Chapter 3 details the rationale used to construct a strategic organizational culture framework that Yolo County and similar agencies can use to understand the characteristics required to develop an agile and strategic agency. Chapter 4 then presents the Strategic Culture Framework and elaborates on the six critical characteristics that were identified in the preceding chapters. Subsequently, Chapter 5 discusses the concept of momentum building, recommends a circular change processes, and identifies potential barriers to culture change in order to prepare an administrator for initiating a culture shift. Finally, Chapter 6 revisits the purpose of this thesis, explores opportunities for future research, and provides final recommendations to Yolo County.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review is to build an understanding of the characteristics that are commonly associated with more strategic and agile organizations. In the field of organizational administration, four overlapping disciplines speak to these characteristics. First, organizational culture research examines the more intangible qualities like values, behaviors, and attitudes that drive and sustain processes and decision-making. Intertwined with organizational culture, the second discipline leadership studies speak is the influence of leadership type and an individual's ability to shape culture, drive change, and manage outcomes. A third discipline, organizational development focuses on improving the functioning of organizations by applying individualized interventions and broader change processes (Rainey, 2009). Finally, strategic planning literature speaks to the importance of a specific, regimented process capable of generating commitment to vision and mission attainment (Bryson, 2004). This chapter will review each of the four perspectives regarding the qualities that support a strategic, agile organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The topic of organizational culture commands attention across multiple disciplines. From psychology to sociology to anthropology to public administration, scholars and practitioners alike are interested in learning the various dimensions of culture to understand the intangible qualities affecting the effectiveness of workplace environments. While the topic did not generate interest until the early 1980s, searching “organizational culture” today generates over 3,000 studies in the Harvard Business Review alone. Lasting interest in this subject demonstrates the construct's importance in administrative studies and speaks to the power of culture to influence organizational activities, processes, and outcomes. Organizations develop unique cultures that

ultimately impact overall agency effectiveness. This section will develop an understanding of organizational culture and effective characteristics that produce a strategic, agile agency.

What is Organizational Culture?

Culture is an abstract concept applied across multiple academic and social fields with changing contextual meanings. The rapid increase in attention paid to the subject garnered fundamental disagreements about what culture is and how it should be studied. Not only is culture difficult to definitively describe, but organizations and their leaders are in constant pursuit of a “good” or “right” or “functionally effective” culture. Most can agree that “it” exists and that “it’s” effects are important. Edgar Schein (2004) concurs that attempts to define culture are not only numerous but vary dramatically, leaving different ideas about what exactly “it” is. For example, the Merriam-Webster (2011) dictionary presents ten different interpretations of culture ranging from “developing the intellectual and moral faculties” to an “acquaintance with and taste in fine arts” to “the act or process of cultivating living material in a prepared nutrient.” Despite these differences, most authors concur that the concept of organizational culture refers to the shared values, underlying assumptions, and behavioral expectations that govern decision-making (Schein, 1985; Barney, 1986; Alvesson, 1990; Hofstede, 1998; Christensen, 2006; Senge, 2006; Kissack & Callahan, 2009; Rainey, 2009; Cameron & Quinn, 2011). In other words, culture creates social order, continuity, and a collective identity that generates commitment to rules about “how we do things” and “how to get the job done” within organizations (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

Acknowledging Cultural Variation

Organizational research does reveal differences in philosophical positions regarding the variation of culture within an agency. First, one culture can exist across an entire organization

(Frost, *et al.*, 1991; Martin, 2004; Rainey, 2009). Commonly referred to as “integration,” this perspective assumes culture is both implicitly and explicitly characterized by consistency and clarity of agency values and goals revolving around a clearly articulated vision (Frost, *et al.*, 1991). Derived from Schein’s (2004) organizational level, group members receive constant messaging regarding acceptable behaviors and responses to various situations. Through a series of case studies, Bolman and Deal (2008) support integrative perspectives and argue culture is embedded across entire organizations over time as members develop common beliefs, values and practices that are then transferred to new recruits.

Organizations can also produce multiple cultures or subcultures (Rainey, 2009). Differentiationists believe organizations are comprised of coexisting subcultures that overlap to create intergroup harmony, conflict, or indifference (Martin, 2004). Additionally, consensus and clarity of norms, values, and goals largely exists within the bounds of each subculture (Frost, *et al.*, 1991). Schein (2004) argues each organization, at minimum, contains three subcultures among 1) front-line personnel executing tasks; 2) the subset focused on process design, innovation, and improvement; and 3) executive personnel responsible for organizational survival and long-term effectiveness.

Finally, the fragmentation perspective perceives culture as more issue-specific and fragmented (Frost, *et al.*, 1991; Martin, 2004). The underlying assumptions driving decision-making and individual behaviors are generated through a reoccurring process: a problem arises, a group reacts, and a network is developed around the issue until a new problem arises. Group norms then reorganize around the new issues (Frost, *et al.*, 1991). In other words, issue-centric attitudes emerge and group norms are triggered by specific events or external changes influencing the primary mission of an agency. Because variation is likely to occur across multiple

departments in large public agencies, administrators either can focus on the entire organization or can assess different sub-unit cultures to determine where commonalities exist (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

Characteristics of Strategic Organizations

Initial research priorities revolved around defining culture and identifying basic levels for understanding the phenomena. Practitioner based reports also relied heavily on individual anecdotes, personal experience, and case studies; however, as culture gained traction among scholars, theories or cultural frameworks using more robust data sets have emerged. Increased practitioner-based observation and quantitative evaluation of organizational behavior motivated scholars to document and explain organizational phenomena already occurring within agencies. While effective culture is tied to congruence with several organizational components, scholarship reveals common themes associated with the culture of more strategic and agile organizations. While non-exhaustive, this section presents the predominant organizational culture characteristics present in strategic agencies.

1. Emphasize Interrelationships: Strategic culture values two mechanisms that emphasize organizational interrelationships—systems thinking and feedback loops. First, systems-thinking enables agency members to understand the interconnectedness of individuals, workgroups, departments, processes, and organizational structures that foster increased collaboration and confidence in achieving complex objectives (Kim, 1993). Senge (2006) interprets systems thinking as the discipline “for seeing “structures” that underlie complex situations, and for discerning high from low leverage change” (p. 69). Systems thinking also requires purposeful communication capable of conveying circular relationships and exposing the interdependency of individual units (Argyris, 1977).

Feedback loops are communication mechanisms that support systems thinking and forces critical evaluation of processes, policies, and decisions (*ibid*). In other words, a feedback loop is a circular communication style purposed to continually detect errors both horizontally and vertically within an agency. Both systems-thinking and feedback loop constructs disrupt status-quo patterns of thinking (mental models) providing an ability to change “how things are always done.”

2. Shared Vision & Mission: A shared vision and mission create a core set of managerial values serving to moderate the way in which business is executed (Bryson, 2004). Henry Mintzberg and Frances Westley (1992) characterize shared vision as a step in organizational change involving a forced synthesis of individual initiatives into a common mission, myth, or behavior code that eventually guides decision-making. At the most basic level, a shared vision answers, “what do we want to create” where ideals established in the discipline of personal mastery answers, “what do I want to create” (Senge, 2006). Because public agencies have ambiguous service goals and often operate under conflicting mandated responsibilities, a central concept (vision) supported by an action-oriented philosophy (mission) provides profound cohesion amongst diverse personnel and contributes to an increased sense of commitment (Ring & Perry, 1985).

Finally, a vision-centered culture makes it easier to clarify outcomes and identify personnel responsibilities by equipping members with a clear direction (Senge, 2006). The famous New York Yankees baseball player, Yogi Berra, once stated, “You’ve got to be very careful if you don’t know where you’re going, because you might not get there” (Penick, 2005). While overly simplified, Berra’s statement portrays the critical importance of an organizational

mission. Public administrators must often delicately balance competing agency purposes within their mandated mission (Rainey, 2009).

3. Leadership: The concept that leadership plays a critical role in an agency's culture gained traction in the late 1980s when several researchers revealed organizational effectiveness improves when managers place a heavy emphasis on the cultural dimensions of their firm (Ouchi, 1981; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Collins and Porras, 1997; Schein, 2004). In a strategic culture, administrators support vision development and must not only be willing to share his personal vision but must also ask, "will you follow me?" Strategic leaders practice personal mastery and are open to feedback and criticism (Senge, 2006). Lastly, value drivers of strategic leadership are commitment, communication, development, and innovation (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Executives strive to foster a safe environment where the status quo can be questioned and innovation encouraged.

4. Commitment to Learning: Several organizational culture theories agree that commitment to learning indicates an agency values personal mastery and personnel development (McGill, *et al.*, 1992; Barker & Camarata, 1998; Senge, 2006; Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Considering the most pervasive force in any agency is its people, the first organizational learning cornerstone relies upon the most basic organizational unit—the individual. "Personal mastery" implies a commitment to individual growth and learning in order to expand personal abilities to experiment and collaboratively reframe problems (McGill, *et al.*, 1992; Senge, 2006). Characteristics of employees who can easily embrace personal mastery include passion, flexibility, patience, perseverance, a sense of purpose, and ownership because this concept requires a special level of proficiency that is committed to improvement (Senge, 2006). Agencies cultivating personal mastery assume personnel development is a priority. Strategic agencies provide a working

environment that enables conditions for people to lead enriched lives and supports knowledge acquisition both on and off the job (Barker and Camarata, 1998). Commitment to development opportunities also indicates a level of employee empowerment and ownership of responsibilities (Senge, 2006).

LEADERSHIP

While the literature reveals disagreements regarding the role of leadership and its ability to establish, shape, and redirect culture is mixed, none contest that leadership is a significant topic throughout organizational culture studies. Rainey (2009) argues that the transformational and charismatic leadership movements (i.e. administrators who avoid micromanaging subordinates) exert influence through the social architecture of the agency. In other words, these leadership styles work with a variety of culture communication mechanisms to convey agency-wide organizational values that inform individual behaviors.

Additionally, the importance of leadership is reiterated across culture, organizational development, and strategic planning scholarship. Cultural leadership studies highlight the role of personal values in the social process of leadership. Schein (2010) further argues that leaders are entrepreneurs and architects of group cultures. If elements of the culture then become dysfunctional and are no longer conducive to the collective objective, it is the leader's responsibility to speed up cultural change (Schein, 2010). Rainey (2009) notes that culture and leadership are conceptually intertwined topics; however, the manager most strongly embodies and transmits existing cultures. House's (2004) findings corroborate these findings by demonstrating that leadership styles influence several components of an organization's underlying values, attitudes, and behaviors.

Characteristics of Strategic Leadership

Leadership studies acknowledge that there are many appropriate and effective leadership styles that are often dependent upon connections between the existing organizational culture and primary agency tasks. Modern leadership theorists agree that agencies producing more strategic and agile environments embody a transformative leadership style (Rainey, 2009). Bennis and Nanus (2003) believe leadership is the driving force behind any successful organization and it is the manager's responsibility to help organize, develop and mobilize employees towards a clear vision. Unlike the traditional counterparts emphasizing tasks and processes, transformational theory emotionalizes leadership and recognizes the value of symbolic behaviors. When leaders commit to difficult objectives and make self-sacrifices to accomplish goals, subordinates are inspired to follow suit (Rainey, 2009). Dominant characteristics associated with the transformative style include 1) inspiring clear vision, 2) focusing on people, and 3) disciplined in action.

1. Inspiring Clear Vision: Across multiple authors, inspiring clear vision is the mark of a strategic and effective administrator (Collins, 2001; Kotter, 2001; Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Heifeits & Laurie, 2002; Drucker, 2004; Senge 2006; Goleman 2010). Strategic leaders are capable of simplifying complex agency objectives into a single idea that compels decision-making (Collins, 2001). Bennis & Thomas (2002) characterize this concept as utilizing a compelling perspective to engage others in a shared organizational meaning. This implies a commitment to personal mastery and disciplined thought processes are achieved through critical self- and agency reflection (Senge, 2006). Crystallizing a profound vision also demonstrates the leader's willingness to confront the brutal facts of the agency and push toward a desired future

(Collins, 2001; Bryson, 2004; Senge, 2006). Finally, strategic leaders take responsibility for communicating their personal vision (Drucker, 2004).

2. Focus on the People: Both Kotter (2001) and Collins (2001) determine an effective, strategic administrator possess the skill to identify personnel that “fit” the agency and then align these individuals in skill-maximizing positions. By emphasizing the “who” of the agency over the “what” strategic leaders recruit and select self-motivated employees who value personal mastery and innovative solutions (Collins, 2001). Finally, strategic leaders are able to build trusting relationships to move people in a desired direction while empowering skilled individuals to interpret the environment and make decisions (Ancona, 2008; Goleman, 2010).

3. Disciplined Action: A third reappearing theme across leadership literature indicates strategic administrators possess an unyielding discipline to stop tasks that are a distraction to the overall organizational vision (Collins, 2001; Drucker, 2004; Goleman, 2010). This also implies an ability to trace agency task overlap and eliminate redundancy. Finally, disciplined action also requires a level of self-awareness and self-regulation to redirect disruptive behaviors, communicate behavioral norms, and immediately recognize contrary feedback to make course corrections (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Goleman, 2010).

ORGANIZATONAL DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of organizational development studies to is to apply interventions and change processes in order to improve the functioning of organizations (Rainey, 2009). Chris Argyris (1971) argues that the humanistic approaches associated with organizational development and change management create self-energizing, dynamic, and strategic agencies that produce better outcomes. Organizational development consultants typically work with a small group of “change agents” for the purposes of improving communication, problem solving, conflict

resolution, decision-making, and openness (Rainey, 2009). Focusing predominantly on humanistic change (i.e. personnel satisfaction), the goals of organizational development include diagnosing and overcoming agency problems by providing agencies with interventions that equip members with the ability to manage units more effectively (Argyris, 1971; French & Bell, 1999; Rainey, 2009). In other words, this administrative discipline uses intervention processes to drive and change organizational culture components.

Scholars identify several organizational development theories, models, and techniques that are individualized to meet specific change needs (French & Bell, 1999; Rainey, 2009). A more broad organizational development model involves 1) performing a gap analysis relative to the identified problem; 2) conferring with an external consultant; 3) accepting diagnostic feedback; 4) develop an action plan; 5) implement action plan; and 6) continually evaluate data and feedback to modify plan (*ibid*). Some intervention techniques associated with this process include modification of recruitment and personnel selection, training programs, organization-wide surveys, management by objectives, team building exercises, and analyzing/clarifying roles and responsibilities (Newton & Raia, 1971; Rainey, 2009).

Characteristics of Effective Organizational Development

While there are diverse process models and a wide range of intervention techniques that vary based on individualized problems and intended goals of specific organizational development initiatives, most authors agree there are several characteristics associated with effective organizational development and the movement towards a strategic-oriented agency. These primary conditions for success will be briefly described in this section and include (in no particular order): pressure for improvement, an involved administrator (leadership), cadre of

change champions, clear vision, an initial diagnostic, and reinforcement of results (Kotter, 1995; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Rainey, 2009).

1. Pressure for Improvement: Also referred to as “establishing a sense of urgency,” organizations experiencing a pressure for improvement agency-wide and across relevant external stakeholders were more likely to sustain commitment to development process (Rainey, 2009).

2. Involved Administrator: Like culture and leadership literature, specific leadership qualities support successful process. A top executive must involve themselves heavily in the initial change process steps but also empower and nurture skill building (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). The administrator must also possess a clear vision and be capable of innovating new ways for framing problems (Kotter, 2001).

3. Cadre of Change Champions: Organizational development literature speaks to the critical importance of forming powerful guiding coalitions to support transformation processes (Argyris, 1971; Newton & Raia, 1972; Lumpkin & Dess, 1995; Rainey, 2009). While multi-level cadres are beneficial, change agents must include senior level managers that focus on building internal support across diverse units. Finally, building change teams provides broader communication avenues for the organization’s administrator and creates natural process participation outlets (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006).

4. Clear Vision: There is significant overlap with this concept of clear vision relative to the two preceding organizational research fields. Organizational development research also indicates establishing a clear vision helps direct change efforts, develop strategies that will achieve the vision, and creates consistency of expectations agency-wide (Kotter, 1995; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006).

5. An Initial Diagnostic: A critical element for successfully pursuing organizational development involves an initial diagnostic phase that uses a multi-level, collaborative fact finding approach to 1) understand existing agency dynamics; 2) review agency interrelationships; 3) identify key problems; and 3) generate consensus over benchmark starting points (Harvey, 2001 ; Rainey, 2009).

6. Reinforcement of Results: Organizational development and change management literature reveal the importance of celebrating successes and reinforcing desired patterns of behavior (Harvey, 2001). Kotter (1995) suggests that employees must clearly see the nexus between changed behaviors and desired results in order to sustain commitment to development processes and changed strategies.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Like organizational development, strategic planning is a process-oriented field. Unlike the organizational development model that reflects a broader change process intended to produce improved agencies through humanistic approaches, strategic planning is one management tool that has recently generated popularity among both public and private administrators. Advancing into its own research area, strategic planning focuses on managing strategically by employing stakeholder analysis and environmental scanning (Rainey, 2009). According to seminal author, James Bryson (2004), the purpose of strategic planning is to integrate practices that “develop a continuing commitment to the mission and vision of the organization” (p. 31). In other words, the outcome of this practical process is a culture supporting strategic-thinking with a clear focus on moving an agency toward its desired vision. While there are diverse planning process recommendations, typically strategic planning efforts for public agencies revolve around ten steps (Mintzberg & Westley, 1992; Barzelay & Campbell, 2003; Bryson, 2004). The ten steps include

1) initiate and agree upon planning process; 2) identify organizational mandates; 3) clarify mission and values; 4) assess organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis); 5) identify issues facing the agency; 6) formulate mitigation strategies; 7) review and adopt strategies; 8) establish effective organizational vision; 9) develop an implementation process; and 10) reassess strategies and planning process (Bryson, 2004). These ten steps help identify “where you are,” “where you want to be” and “how to get there” (*ibid*). Ultimately, strategic planning is a process-oriented approach enabling organizations to become effective strategists to fulfill missions, meet mandates, anticipate future challenges, and adapt to changing service demands (Bryson, 2004).

Characteristics of Effective Strategic Planning

Chapter 1 emphasized that management tools alone are insufficient to sustain long-term changes and do not effectively reshape the underlying values governing decision-making; however, further examination of the literature reveals the characteristics of sustained and successful planning efforts. Critical components to strategic planning success include 1) tailoring the process; 2) establishing a clear vision and mission; 3) action-oriented leadership; 4) active involvement of an executive team; and 5) evaluation.

1. Tailor the Process: Effective planning requires a process that focuses on the fundamental issues facing an organization (Poister & Strieb, 1994). Public agencies in particular must be in tune with their unique challenges. Simply borrowing private sector techniques is not an effective method for public organizations. For example, private firms can pilot strategies and test effectiveness using profitability feedback and thus, redirect planning initiatives appropriately. Public agencies face greater ambiguity and unclear outcome measure making the goal phase of

traditional planning processes challenging (Nutt & Backoff, 1993). One effective way of tailoring a strategic process is to articulate goals in terms of scope of services provided (*ibid*).

2. Establish Clear Mission and Vision: Providing justification for existence, organizational mission and clear vision projects where an agency is headed (Bryson, 2004). Mission and values must be collaboratively developed utilizing several modes of participation mechanisms in order to generate sustained commitment to the process and identify actionable objective relative to the mission and vision. Finally, an agreement on organizational purpose alleviates a level of ambiguity associated with public agency mandates and goals (*ibid*).

3. Action-Oriented Leadership: This characteristic, identified in the three preceding disciplines, is critical to driving a planning process forward (Poister & Strieb, 1994; Rainey 2008). According to Bryson (2004) an action-oriented leader is committed to understanding his organizational context, willing to sponsor and facilitate the process, fosters collaboration across agency units, implements generated policy decisions, and balances the enforcement of new norms while understanding personnel perspectives.

4. Active Involvement of an Executive Team: Like organizational development, the active involvement of an executive team marks successful strategic planning outcomes. An executive team can individualize engagement strategies across disparate units, seek line level feedback, and collaborate across units to inform process steps. Additionally, major change efforts (particularly those directed towards agency values) accompanying strategic planning require diverse levels of leadership (Bryson, 2004).

5. Evaluation: Strategic planning scholars agree that the process cycle is circular in nature requiring ongoing evaluation of implementation strategies (Ring & Perry, 1985; Poister & Strieb, 1994; Barzelay & Campbell, 2003; Bryson, 2004; Rainey, 2009). Evaluation is also related to the

cultural concept of feedback loop as it is a communication mechanisms purposed to transmit evaluative information agency-wide (Argyris, 1977).

SUMMARIZING SIMILARITIES ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Despite the diffuse nature of this research, common characteristics of strategic organizations begin to emerge across the various administrative disciplines. While the characteristics presented are not intended to provide an exhaustive list of qualities associated with strategic, agile agencies, they do represent the broader themes emerging across the four disciplines reviewed. Table 2. 1 maps the strategic characteristics identified against the organizational culture, leadership, organizational development, and strategic planning research areas. Additionally, the four fields of study are separated into two categories, one “value-based” research and the other “process-based” research to organizational improvement. Both organizational culture and leadership research identify normative frameworks to describe strategic agencies and speak directly to the intangible phenomena governing agency behaviors. In other words, organizational culture research explains how culture should manifest itself within an agency to product strategic-thinking. Similarly, leadership research describes the qualities administrators ought to embrace. Change processes are then submitted as supplementary recommendations to achieve a prototype culture or specific leadership type. Conversely, I distinguish organizational development and strategic planning as “process-based” research. Both fields emphasize more practical, structural approaches to achieving a desired change. As a result, Table 2.1 color-codes the values-based disciplines (blue) and the process-based approaches (green)—a contrast applied in Chapter 3.

Academic Discipline	Organizational Culture	Leadership	Organizational Development	Strategic Planning
Construct Category	Value-Based		Process-Based	
<u>Characteristics</u>				
Cadre of Change Champions		X	X	X
Clear Vision	X	X	X	X
Commitment to Learning	X	X		
Evaluation				X
Initial Diagnostic (assessment)			X	
Interrelationships:	X	X	X	X
feedback loop	X	X		X
systems thinking	X	X	X	X
Leadership:	X	X	X	X
action-oriented				X
disciplined		X		
human relations orientation			X	
involved in process			X	
personal mastery	X	X		
values team leadership		X	X	X
visionary	X	X	X	X
Personnel Development	X	X	X	X
Pressure for Improvement			X	
Reinforcement of Results				X
Tailored Change Process				X

Each discipline references the role of leadership, stresses the importance of agency interrelationships and vision, and identifies personnel development as critical characteristics associated with more strategic organizations. Additionally, all four research areas link

performance with cultural dimensions (i.e. the values, and assumptions driving decision-making) and note that more strategic agencies take on flexible and responsive cultures lead by empowering leaders who value and convey a clear organizational direction (Weiss, 1999; Moon, 2000; Bryson 2004; Drucker, 2004; Rainey, 2009).

Overall, most scholars agree that the forces and social situations derived from organizational culture are powerful, and the failure to first acknowledge and then understand those forces can have both detrimental and lasting impacts on organizational performance (Schein, 2004; Christensen, 2006; Rainey, 2009). Additionally, recent studies focusing on public sector agencies identify leadership type, level of professional expertise, relationship to external environment (i.e. autonomy from political intrusion), interagency coordination and communication, clarity of organizational vision, flexibility, and resources discretion as influencing factors on culture development (Lurie and Riccucci, 2003; Rainey, 2009). Chapter 3 analyzes the characteristics identified within the literature to develop a simplified, multi-disciplinary six-fold strategic culture framework that can assist administrators in proactively building a more agile agency capable of innovative problem solving and adapting to changing demands both internally and externally.

CHAPTER 3: CONSTRUCTING THE STRATEGIC CULTURE FRAMEWORK

Analysis of organizational culture, leadership, organizational development, and strategic planning literature exposed common themes critical to developing more strategic agencies. Because Yolo County is specifically looking to generate a more agile agency and has identified challenges in sustaining long-term commitment to strategic planning processes, this thesis provides a modified culture framework for reshaping individual, group, and agency-wide values capable of institutionalizing improvement processes like strategic planning. In other words, a values-based initiative that incorporates process-drivers will assist Yolo County in developing a strategic agency that transcends the stimulus of individual champions. This chapter describes the rationale behind the characteristics selected for the Strategic Culture Framework detailed in Chapter 4.

Why construct an alternative culture framework? In most instances, scholars have taken a more descriptive, normative approach in documenting, explaining, and building models of pre-existing organizational phenomena (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Additionally, many existing cultural theories have yet to marry both the value-based and process-based characteristics into one cohesive framework. A more prescriptive approach is necessary to resolve the primary question at hand: what components create an agile, strategic organizational culture capable of sustaining innovation and changing demands?

Yolo County's Background

Founded in 1850 as one of California's original counties, Yolo County covers approximately 1,021 square miles and is located directly west of Sacramento and northeast of the Bay area counties of Solano and Napa. To this day, Yolo remains a relatively rural, agriculturally based community; their commitment of 97.2% of its unincorporated land to agricultural use does

not come without a price. Despite holding one of the lowest property tax shares in the state, the county must provide the same core services as its 57 sister counties (Yolo County, 2011). Considering their resource constraints, Yolo County executives acknowledge the critical importance of developing a strategic agency to weather the turbulent nature of an externally dependent budget process and manage mandated service delivery.

Yolo County executives began implementing management tools like continuous quality improvement and strategic planning in the 1990s. Initiated by a reportedly active county administrator with a transactional leadership style (i.e. responsive, motivates followers through self-interest) initial efforts to instill principles of continual improvement focused on working within an existing culture to achieve efficiencies. Additionally, cross-agency teams were created to critically examine processes and submit improvement recommendations. Coined “QUEST” (Quality Enhancement Support Team), these teams would also serve as mentoring groups throughout the county. While efforts largely focused on slight course corrections, change momentum diffused during periods of transitional leadership. As energy behind creating an organization committed to process improvement faded, personnel reverted to status quo values, attitudes, and behaviors that drive decision-making.

In the mid-2000s, a third executive (in just ten years) reenergized previous improvement efforts. Rather than emphasizing continuous quality improvement, Yolo began a strategic planning process under the guidance of an external consultant and inclusion of the Board of Supervisors. While the new process effort was the first to bring board members and all department heads into the visioning process, the overall strategic planning model was a prototype tool that was unable to generate a cohesive mission, resulting in a clash of competing values. To this day, some county employees subscribe to the values of past administrators (“doing right by

people”) and others, the S.P.I.R.I.T motto. Additionally, anecdotal evidence indicated that planning processes neither engaged a broad cross-section of employees nor created open communication mechanisms across diverse personnel and agency units. Finally, goals developed through the strategic planning initiative lacked direct links to daily tasks.

In short, Yolo County’s process efforts to enhance mission fulfillment and develop an agency committed to continual improvement and long-term goals experienced common barriers public organizations experience. First, disruptions in leadership resulted in inconsistent initiatives influencing the ability to generate the momentum needed to drive lasting change. Additionally, the management tools selected did not engage both vertical and horizontal personnel levels, which resulted in inconsistent values and an unclear vision for the agency. Furthermore, the latter strategic planning process lacked multi-level champions to communicate the relationship of planning activities to daily, line-level responsibilities and long-term outcomes. While Yolo County’s past planning efforts did increase communication among executive managers and board members, the improvement attempts largely focused on process.

Because Yolo County has struggled to institutionalize planning processes and sustain long-term commitments to new business practices (a common organizational plight), it is important to hone-in on the underlying, intangible qualities governing organizational behaviors and decision-making. However, cultural characteristics alone are not sufficient for motivating an initial change. Incorporating both process-based and values-based strategic characteristics is critical to creating a self-sustaining strategic culture instigated by change drivers.

Rationale for Included Components

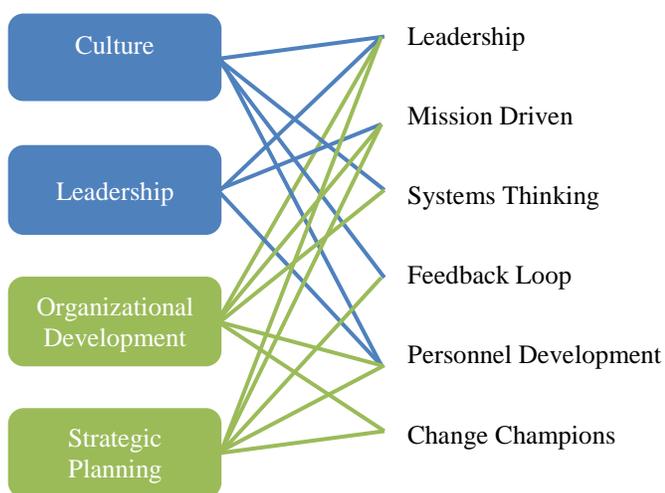
In order to develop a more proactive culture framework, Table 2.1 was synthesized into six components (see Figure 3.1). In order to derive these six specific components, I first separated

the four disciplines reviewed in Chapter 2 into two categories—values-based theory (identified by the color blue) and process-based theory (identified by the color green). The four disciplines (culture, leadership, organizational development, and strategic planning) presented in Chapter 2 are separated as follows—culture and leadership (values-based) and organizational development and strategic planning (process based). This juxtaposed approach helps support the selection of characteristics that are most conducive to supporting strategic agencies.

Next steps involved

analyzing each characteristic outlined in Table 2.1 to identify pervasive variables that traverse all four research fields. These variables include clear vision and visionary leadership; an emphasis on organizational interrelationships with a specific gravitation towards systems thinking; and commitment to personnel development.

Figure 3.1: Comparing Academic Disciplines against Selected Strategic Culture Components



Characteristics that surfaced across three of the four disciplines revealed include creating a cadre of change champions and development of feedback loop communication mechanisms. From this analysis, it was important to ensure the characteristics prevalent in a comprehensive strategic culture framework were not only consistent with the literature but included both values-based and process-based components.

Ultimately, six characteristics were identified as critical to the strategic framework: leadership, mission-driven, systems-thinking, feedback loop, personnel development, and change champions. These factors also overlap with elements Peter Senge's learning organization that centers on five disciplines: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning. Figure 3.1 compares the academic disciplines against the selected variables that will be incorporated into a strategic culture framework detailed in Chapter 4. Clearly, the six components provide a blend of both values-based and process-based research.

Rationale for Excluded Components

Not all characteristics identified by the literature were incorporated into the construction of a strategic culture framework. The first exclusionary criterion revolves around process-based research. Because there is evidence that process-based tools alone can neither sustain change efforts nor induce long-term commitment to strategic values, any characteristic that was associated with only one process-based discipline was eliminated. These variables include pressure for improvement, reinforcement of results, and a tailored change process. While these variables are critical to change management, they are not specifically called out by the values-based literature as characteristics capable of reshaping the intangible qualities governing decision-making. Additionally, the process-based components will be referenced under implementation recommendations in Chapter 5.

A secondary, and similar criterion used to eliminate two additional characteristics was any item not present in more than two academic disciplines was removed. First, the removed characteristic "evaluation" is a process-based variable that is also represented in later implementation recommendations. The second characteristic that was not included in the strategic culture framework as result of this criterion is "commitment to learning." While the construct is

not explicitly addressed, the personnel development component incorporates elements of individual, group, and organizational learning (detailed in Chapter 4).

Despite receiving attention across all four fields of study, the final characteristic that is not specifically represented in Figure 3.1 is “clear vision.” While some might perceive this choice as an exclusion, I posit that the characteristic folds into and emphasizes within both leadership and mission-driven components of the constructed framework. A primary task of a strategic leader attempting to create an agile organization is the development of a clear personal vision that then becomes the underlying source of agency-wide inspiration and motivation. Additionally, a mission-driven agency moves forward with the administrator’s vision to create a set of action-oriented values associated with mission development.

Limitations of Framework Constructions

Due to time constraints, feasibility, and capacity concerns, systematically cataloging complete bodies of research across four interrelated fields is beyond the scope of this thesis. The limitations of this study are three-fold. First, construction of a cohesive strategic culture type relied heavily on more qualitative methods of analysis. Consequently, the combination of variables detailed in Chapter 4 has not been empirically validated. Secondly, it is assumed that a pressure for change exists and that there is a mismatch between existing organizational values and those of a strategic agency. Finally, when it comes to designing culture theory, it is difficult to claim one framework is the “best” or most “appropriate.” Because organizational dimensions are broad, complex, and interrelated one or more element can always be argued relevant. In this case, a framework was designed with a particular agency in mind, Yolo County, who has a specific goal of creating a more strategic, agile public agency. Chapter 4 presents the Strategic Culture Framework and elaborates on each of the six selected components identified in Figure 3.1.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTING THE STRATEGIC CULTURE FRAMEWORK

While representing retooled application of existing theory, the Strategic Culture Framework is intended to be proactively implemented by administrators seeking to institutionalize strategic decision-making. The overarching value-based elements drive the underlying assumptions and behaviors of the agency to generate an entity more responsive to

Figure 4.1: Strategic Culture Framework



changing demands and better able to quickly apply feedback and problem-solve. Organizations committed to the framework value innovation but are subjected to external pressure and are routinely constrained by external forces that limit risk taking.

Constructed from the six components identified in Chapter 3 and depicted in Figure 4.1, each characteristic is distinct and can exist independently; however, developing synergy between

each characteristic is recommended. Furthermore, the order in which the six components are presented in this paper is intentional. Like a carefully constructed game of dominoes, subtle momentum is generated when each piece is deliberately developed. Starting at the top of Figure 4.1 and moving clockwise, the interrelated components begin with value-based characteristics and move towards more process-based factors that drive continual culture development.

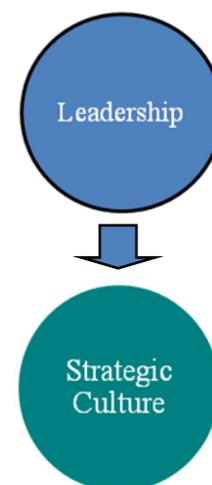
Finally, this framework takes an integrative view on culture development. While subcultures are likely to exist across units and mechanisms for communicating culture might differ based on the unique responsivity factors of each county department, the six recommended components should act as the overarching values driving behaviors and decision-making. Culture is a powerful and contagious tool to sustain an effective agency only when the associated values are common, consensual, and integrated (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). A strategic and adaptive integrated organizational culture can help overcome the fragmentation, ambiguity, and changing nature of the distinct challenges facing California counties and other government entities (*Ibid*). I encourage administrators interested in cultivating strategic, adaptive cultures to critically examine their existing organizational environment against the framework presented.

Leadership

“The real importance of what leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture.”—E. Schein

Like culture, leadership has become a complicated topic drawn from a variety of disciplines. Several organizational theorists suggest effective executives and managers not only possess the ability to think, act, and learn strategically but these individuals also empower and support personnel to behave in a similar manner (Bryson, 2004; Senge, 2006; Van Wart and Dicke, 2008).

The first values-based component critical to the Strategic Culture Framework is deliberate leadership—an approach requiring a disciplined pursuit of a clear vision and a willingness to be actively involved in process-based initiatives. These administrators focus agency energies towards a common goal and work relentlessly in getting the right people “on-



board.” What does “deliberate leadership” look like? The following qualities described in this section characterize a deliberative leadership approach:

- Get the right people
- Clear personal vision
- Knows when to stop “doing”

1. Getting the right people

Historically, when administrators establish a new organization, initiate a change process, or redirect agency activities, the dominant strategy includes determining objectives and announcing to an executive team and agency members a new direction. While establishing a clear direction and vision is a critical leadership responsibility (discussed in latter sections), Jim Collins (2001) suggests, “getting the right people on the bus” is an essential first step. In other words, effective managers start with the “who” not the “what” (*ibid*). This challenge requires establishing clear expectations of personnel and evaluating the types of people required to steer the agency effectively.

Recognizing administrators rarely start with a clean slate, this concept does not imply automatic termination of existing personnel but instead, recommends working within an existing structure to identify supportive, effective personnel and incorporating these individuals into the decision making process (Collins, 2001). Eventually, changes initiated by administrators will incentivize the “right” people to stay with the agency. Leaders who are able to recruit and coach the right people do not actually need to spend a lot of time motivating their personnel—the right people are self-motivated, strive for personal mastery and driven by the direction of the bus (Senge, 2006).

2. Clear Personal Vision

A second element critical to leadership is the development and promulgation of a clear personal vision. According to Collins (2001), all good leaders are capable of simplifying complex objectives into a single, organizing idea—a principle that profoundly compels individual decision-making. In other words, they know where they want to go. Individual vision driving a deliberate leader acts as a hidden force behind their agency's larger vision and corresponding mission. This personal vision focuses action, provides direction, and inspires stakeholders to join your team because you have an undeniably clear picture of the future (Collins, 2001).

Developing clear vision is a disciplined thought process that effective leaders wrestle with on a regular basis (Collins, 2001; Bryson, 2004; Senge, 2006). Building on Senge's concept of personal mastery, James Bryson (2004) explains that understanding one's self and others is particularly critical for developing capacity for strategic, deliberate leadership. Furthermore, an individual practicing personal mastery is committed to individual growth and constantly striving towards a desired future (Senge, 2006). A simple, clear future vision creates the mechanism for strategic action in the present (Bryson, 2004).

3. Knows when to stop "doing"

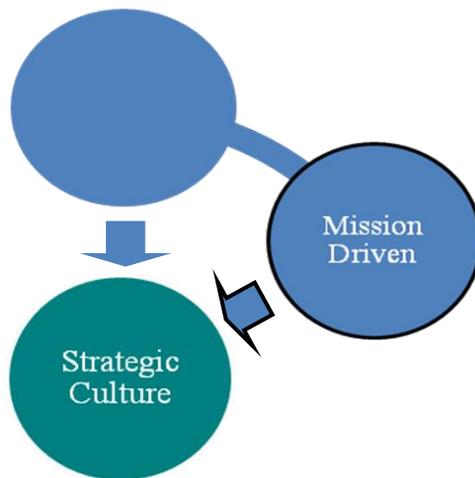
As an executive, you probably face a never-ending "to-do" list and your calendar is frequently booked three-times over. Your days are long, meetings seem endless, and competing priorities are a common occurrence. Now, as a strategic leader you must work to sustain personal competency, refine the agency's vision, and identify talented individuals while redirecting intangible culture qualities that create an adaptive environment. Not to mention, as a public administrator goals are often difficult to measure, resources are scarce, and external pressures are high. The answer to this madness—stop "doing"! Deliberate leaders possess an unyielding discipline to eliminate activities that do not fit tightly with their clear vision (Collins, 2001).

While public agencies do not always possess an ability to eliminate certain mandated services, administrators can apply this concept to daily tasks and critically consider accepting peripheral responsibilities. Dedication to a personal vision coupled with disciplined restraint over time facilitates a changed culture valuing commitment to long-term goals (Senge, 2006). Public administrators must zero-in on their vision for the agency and, when possible, deliberately remove superfluous activities that do not support vision attainment.

While these three characteristics are not exhaustive of effective leadership qualities outlined in Appendix A, together the triad creates a more strategic and deliberate management style—a critical component necessary to begin (re)shaping an organizational culture. Strategic leaders cultivate supportive environments, focus on teamwork and participation, and balance flexible authority with directive vision. Not only do they develop a precise and central objective but they also work to get motivated people in the right positions. Furthermore, administrators honing these skills recognize the importance of communicating culture horizontally and vertically within the organization. This means much of their daily activities involve employee interaction—conversations that incorporate humor and demonstrate concern for topics outside of work (Kotter, 2001). Overall, strategic leader’s model desired organizational behaviors by working actively to sustain motivation and harness self-awareness and self-regulation (Senge, 2006). If you want your agency to innovate, take risks, accept and anticipate change, and focus on long-term consequences than you, as an agency administrator, must model these skills. The ability to perceive the limitations of one’s own culture and then moderate its evolution is the essence and ultimate challenge of strategic administrators.

Mission-Driven

“To be in hell is to drift; to be in heaven is to steer.”-George Bernard Shaw



While leadership is a crucial component that can initiate change momentum and signal the values and assumptions underlying decision-making processes, leadership alone cannot institutionalize an adaptive environment. A mission-driven agency, the second values-based characteristics, converges on a core set of managerial values that define and moderate the way

in which business is executed (Bryson, 2004). Like the driving forces motivating administrator actions, mission development is the cornerstone to agency-wide strategic decision-making. The infamous NASA janitor story exemplifies the motivating power of a clear mission. In 1969 when the United States was actively pursuing space travel and preparing for a lunar landing trip, a reporter stopped a NASA janitor in the hall and asked the employee about his job with the organization. The janitor replied, “My job is to help us get a man on the moon, sir” (DeSimone, 2007). One central concept was so powerful that it provided profound purpose to diverse employee levels and contributed to an invigorated environment committed to accomplishing a vision.

Strategic planning literature frequently speaks to the importance of a mission-driven culture. Ring and Perry (1985) posited that organizations that are more effective appear to focus on a limited set of clearly defined objectives. In a study analyzing ten successful organizations (five public and five private agencies), the researchers discovered each agency emphasized a clear

mission with measurable objectives (Peters & Waterman, 1982). Additionally, the mission was communicated and understood by all agency members. Because an agency cannot expect to command resources indefinitely, the mission clarifies the purpose of the organization and the values guiding decision-making, which ultimately justifies the agency's existence (Bryson, 2006).

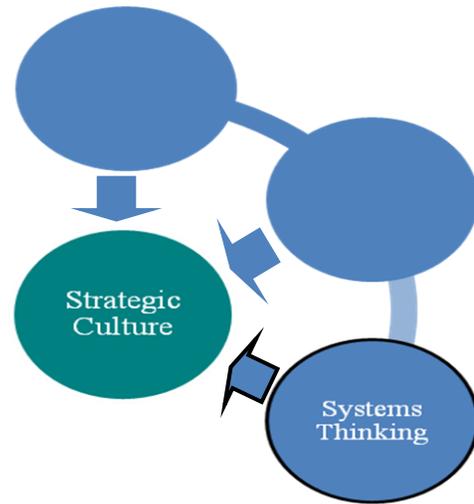
Mission development can be challenging for public agencies due to the conflicting nature of mandated responsibilities. For example, Yolo County's mission includes both preserving open space and championing economic opportunities. While these items are not mutually exclusive, competing interests can undermine one another—a circumstance not unique to the one local jurisdiction. Like Yolo, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection is charged with preserving resources and managing timber yards ("What," n.d.). Similarly, many government agencies must balance providing both equitable and efficient services. Members of a mission-driven culture are able to answer (even if only abstractly) the questions: "who are we, why does our agency exist, and what service needs do we fulfill." A mission-driven culture also facilitates the "stop doing" concept of deliberate leadership. Decisions, processes, and strategies made in contradiction to the underlying mission not only receive little approval from staff but are easier to identify and then eliminate (to the extent that is possible.)

Systems Thinking

"The only way to fully understand why a problem or element occurs and persists is to understand the part in relation to the whole."—Richard Hake, 2008

The third values-based characteristic incorporated into the Strategic Culture Framework is based on the belief that the component parts of a system can be best understood in the context of relationships with each other and with other systems, rather than in isolation (Argyris and Schon, 1974). Corroborating a primary tenant of a learning organization, Figure 4.2 and 4.3

demonstrate the importance of systems thinking and that agency interrelationships and unit dependencies can manifest in a variety of ways. Figure 4.2 lists Yolo County's current 2012 strategic goals and the impacted departments. Similarly, Figure 4.3 lists activities associated with the implementation of a major program change and the corresponding responsible units within the Federal



Communications Commission. Both cases show the complex nature of responsibilities facing two very different public agencies.

Figure 4.2: Interrelationships between Yolo County 2012 Strategic Goals and Service Areas

*extrapolated from March 2012 planning documents

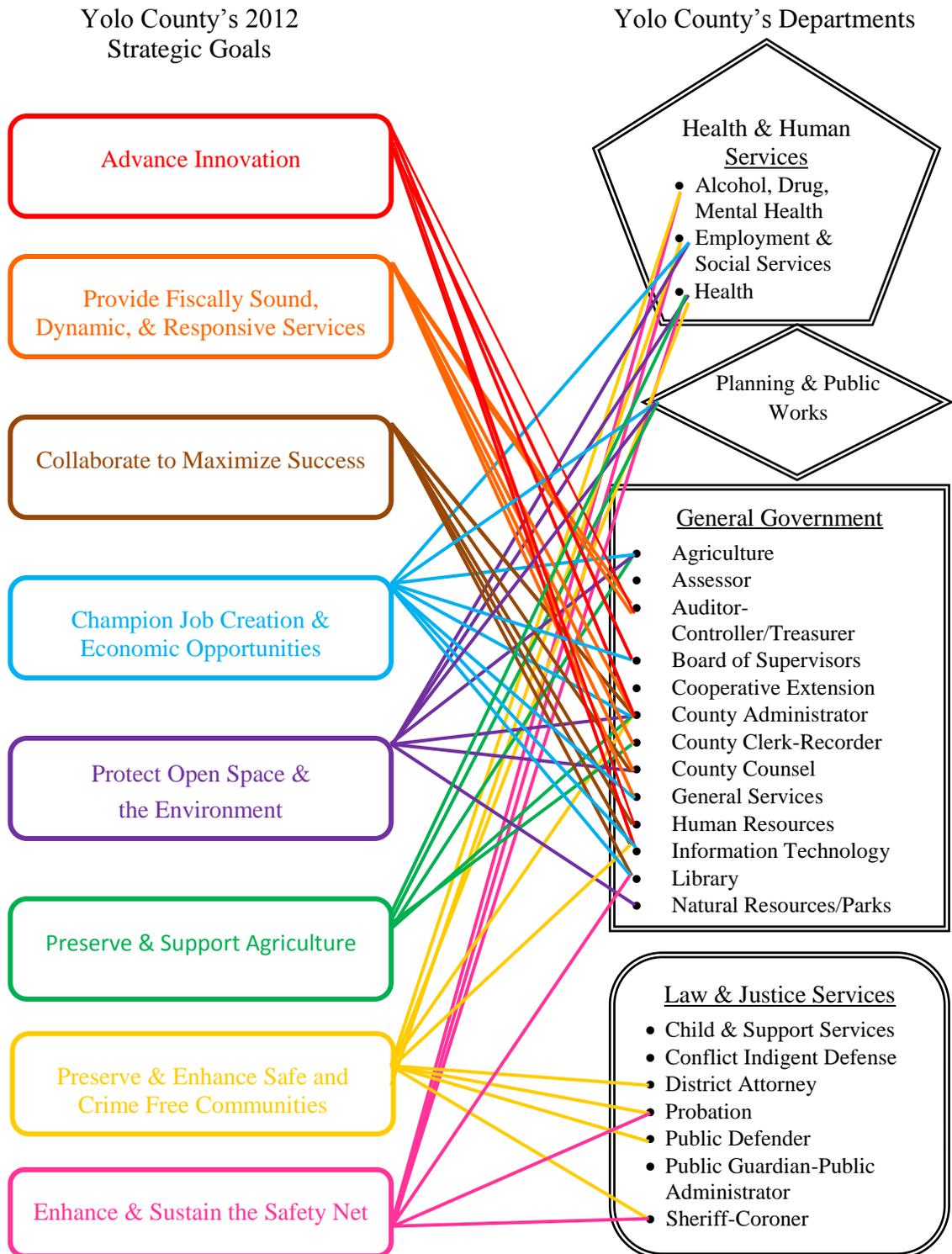
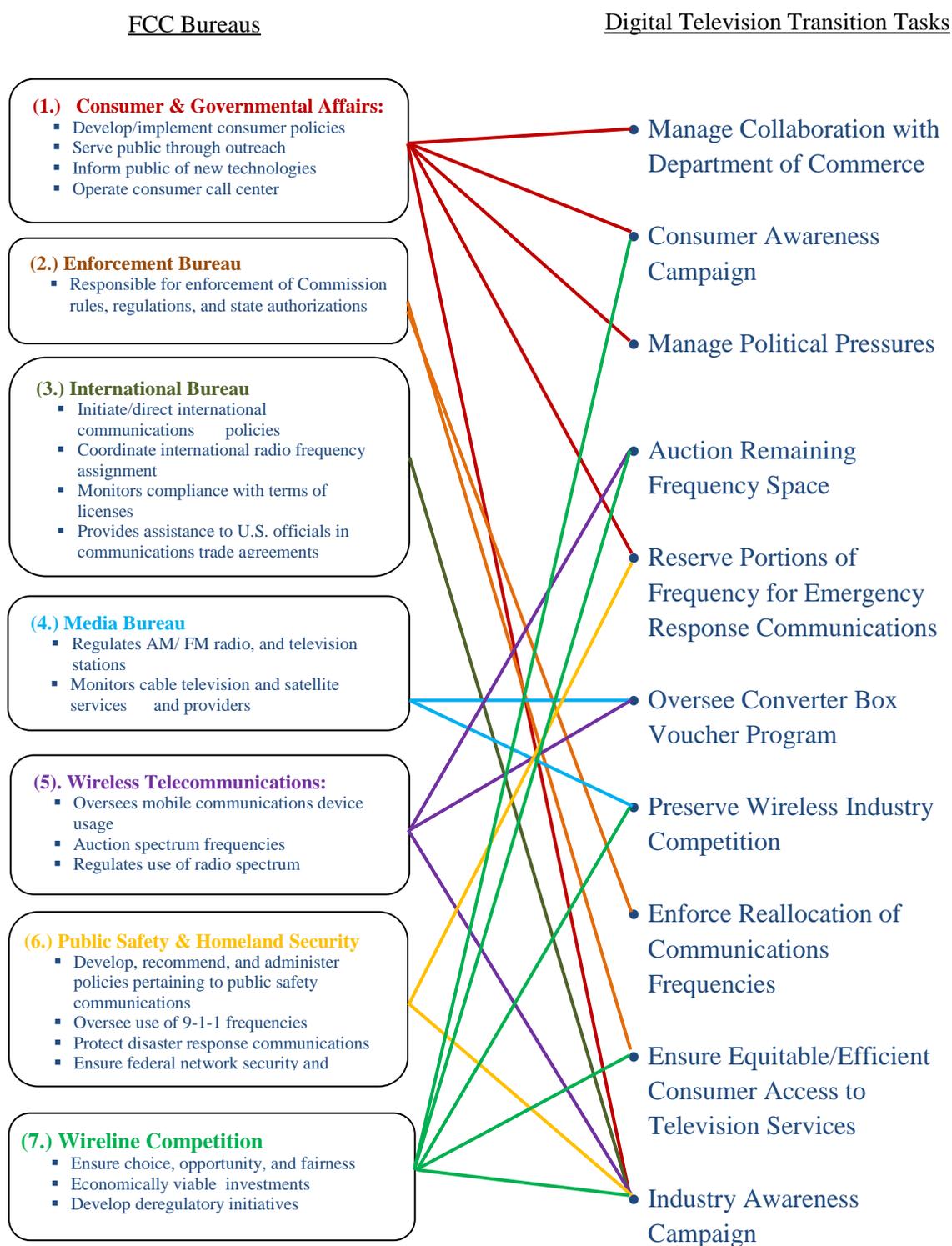


Figure 4.3: Interrelationships between FCC Bureaus and Transition Tasks

*Adapted from Divan, *et al.* (2010)

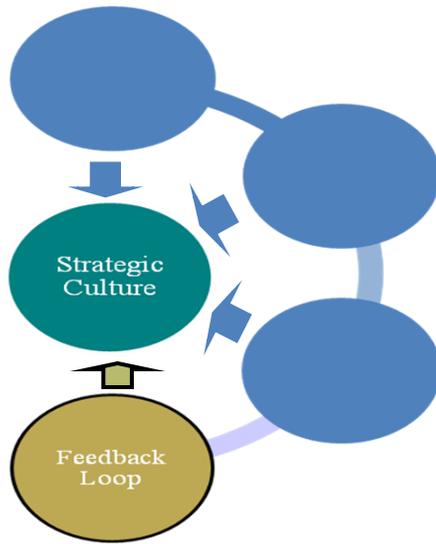
Without a systems orientation, agencies lack adequate linkages that can produce more innovative outcomes. Systems thinking is an underlying cultural assumption that drives team learning and necessitates cross-agency collaboration (Senge, 2006). Additionally, change efforts are maximized when impacted units move together. For example, accomplishing even one of Yolo County's 2012 strategic goals will require a sustained effort across multiple units.

Unfortunately, public organizations today are particularly fragmented. Not only is the public demanding greater government efficiency and accountability during a distressed economic climate, but individual employees also fear layoffs, furloughs, salary reduction, and decreased retirement plans. Consequently, agencies have become more siloed and agency members are less likely to share knowledge or embrace interagency relationships in order to protect their own added agency value. This means true adoption of systems thinking across all agency personnel is a difficult task during times when self-preservation is a priority; however, agencies with interrelated and complex responsibilities cannot expect to effectively meet demands without a systems orientation.

Feedback Loop

“...rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.” –Proverbs 9:8-9

The feedback loop is the counterpart to systems thinking and begins to blend both value-based and process-based characteristics into the Strategic Culture Framework. Not only does it reinforce organizational learning and an expanded view of organizational interrelationships, but feedback loops also institutionalize circular thought patterns through unique communication (Kaplan and Norton, 2000). Furthermore, the construct supports both team learning and diffuse decision making through executive agency parts. Peters and Waterman's (1982) assessment



reveals that among the effective organizations studied, all placed great value on open, honest, and informal communication mechanisms that force system learning.

Behind the aspirations for strategic thinking, closed loop systems fear failure and are ashamed when reflection reveals errors. In other words, ineffective cultures promote habits and attitudes that hide unpleasant truths to mask failures and avoid embarrassment.

NASA's culture story described in Chapter 1 exemplifies closed-loop systems. Cultural forces prevented line-level agency members from effectively communicating the dangers of faulty O-rings and prevented management from accepting contradictory feedback that jeopardized the shuttle launch. Not only do closed loop environments sustain status quo decision-making but they can also produce disastrous outcomes over time.

Because the strategic culture type has mission-driven characteristics, commitment to error exposure is critical to avoid tunnel vision and bounded mental models (Senge, 2006). Where problem solving is related to the first feedback type, the double loop strategy not only analyzes external drivers of culture and decision-making but also integrates self-reflection to develop solutions (Argyris, 1991). In other words, adaptive agencies reinforce communication that encourages self-reflection while simultaneously challenging the underlying assumptions guiding decision-making.

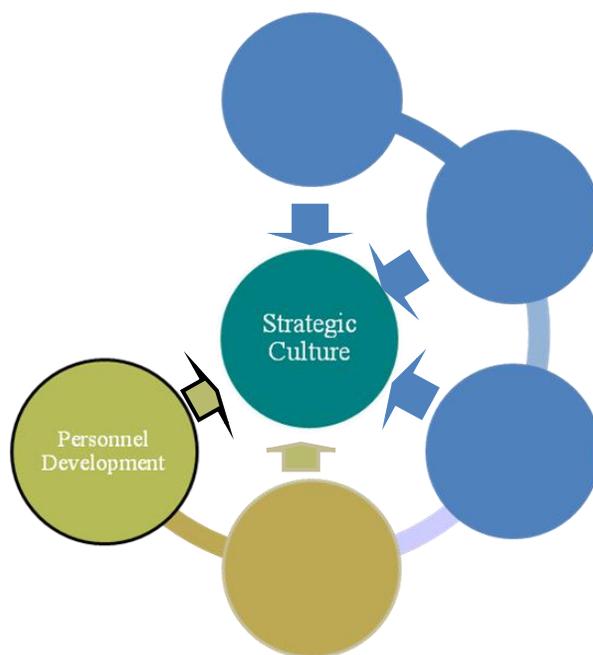
For example, the 2011 public safety realignment has forced law enforcement to utilize tenant of double-loop feedback. The law enforcement culture relied heavily on incarceration as a mechanism for ensuring public safety. Ballooning costs of prison coupled with increasing state

recidivism rates communicates that this system is not effective in accomplishing the desired outcome. In other words, detrimental cultural values have risen to the surface and legislators, administrators, and criminal justice partners are trying to implement new approaches to reducing recidivism in light of the system feedback. This shows that double-loop feedback forces self-conscious personnel to question not only why a goal has been accomplished but if the objective is producing worthwhile outcomes. Ultimately, strategic planning scholars recommend agencies implement two feedback loops (also referred to as “double loop learning”) to produce organizational learning, meet changing service demands, and develop more agile agencies (Argyris, 1977; Kaplan and Norton, 2000; Bryson 2004; Senge, 2006).

Personnel Development

“The only capital an organization has that is irreplaceable is the knowledge and skills of its people.”—Andrew Carnegie

The fifth characteristic of the Strategic Culture Framework acknowledges the importance of individuals. Considering individual behaviors lie at the heart of cultural changes, I would be remiss if personnel development was not incorporated into the presented framework. Standing as both a value and a process, adaptive agencies require strategic thinkers and strategic thinking requires personal mastery. Strategic agencies first value learning and development within an agency and then follow up with that value by committing to learning



processes involving opportunities for staff development. As Senge (2006), detailed, personal mastery implies individuals constantly balance a realistic view of present circumstances against a desired future. Strategic cultures produce an environment where employees feel nurtured and can safely develop, practice, and sustain personal mastery. According to Rainey and Steinbauer (1999), effective agencies support individual learning and risk taking, provide ample training opportunities, and recruit members whose values and preferences support the task and mission. Peters and Waterman (1982) corroborate these recommendations and demonstrate human resource functions of effective agencies challenge people and encourage their enthusiasm for and development of creative ideas. Administrators must be willing to commit financial resources and employee time to growing individual learning.

Change Champions



Increasingly, scholars and practitioners recognize command-and-control business models are no longer conducive to responding effectively to the interdependencies facing most modern agencies (Senge, 1999; Bryson, 2004; Christensen, 2006). The Strategic Culture Framework recognizes the importance of establishing leadership communities to sustain change. Not only does the development infer

the agency supports diffuse decision-making and leadership values employee empowerment, but this characteristic is also a process-based factor the drives culture change. Creating a cadre of

change champions who share a common strategic vision better positions the administrator to effectively communicate a desired cultural message across unique agency units. Additionally, when managers driving culture change are frequently practicing personal mastery, knowledge acquisition, and strategic planning processes—burnout becomes a reality. Building a leadership community generates mutual support and sustains ongoing development while diffusing responsibilities across a larger body of specialized personnel (Senge, 1999).

Peters and Waterman's (1982) findings show that effective organizational managers emphasize delegation of responsibility and authority as widely as possible and as far down in the organization as possible, which further supports the deliberate leadership characteristic. Additionally, Senge (1997) also argues administrators must cultivate three levels of leadership within their agency: 1) imaginative, committed local line leaders; 2) senior managers, and top level executives that mentor line level change agents and act as cultural stewards by modeling behavior; and 3) frontline networkers, who with no formal authority, are able to spread and encourage commitment to new practices.

In short, the final component of the Strategic Culture Framework calls for a rejection of the solo leader-hero mentality and recognizes that one executive is not able to command an entire culture. Lasting systemic change requires dispersed agency subscription to a set of new values. The change champion component builds buy-in and ownership of strategies, resulting in increased commitment to implementing results, efficient implementation periods, and the breakdown of organizational mental models (Schuman, 2006). By encouraging a less controlling and more collaborative environment, an organization can be better equipped to face unpredictable environments and meet changing service needs.

CONNECTING THE CHARACTERISTICS

“A [n effective] organization is focused on success by continuously evolving through new knowledge and preparation for the future rather than codification of the past.”—Paul Chinowsky

This chapter retooled existing research to present a comprehensive framework for administrators by identifying six synergistic characteristics critical for developing a strategic organizational culture capable of supporting an agile agency that responds to changing demands. Understanding each component will help leaders assess the existing underlying values dominating decision-making. By modeling desired



behavior and decision-making processes, managers transmit cues to employees that it is not only safe to think strategically but it is also expected. By building a bridge between values-based and process-based characteristics, the application of the Strategic Culture Framework propels agencies out of stagnancy equipping them to embrace critical feedback that generates more innovative problem solving. When proactively implemented within agencies like Yolo County, the strategic culture type will disrupt “status-quo” patterns of thinking and reward both the critical review of processes and system-wide redirection.

Organizations subscribing to this framework possess a forward-looking orientation and leadership styles incorporate deliberative, empowering, and collaborative approaches to

management. Executives set the tone-at-the-top and are capable of communicating acceptable behavioral norms by expanding decision-making authority to a cadre of change champions, who then serve as a physical feedback loop to agency units. Additionally, these administrators and change champions model personal mastery and introduce reflective business processes. Agency members value continuous improvement, innovation, community building, systems thinking, and are mission-driven. The strategic culture type also assumes individuals are capable of learning, detecting errors, and engaging in the process of double-loop feedback.

Like other cultural typologies, I am not suggesting the Strategic Culture Framework is a cure-all approach for remedying the many maladies facing organizations. Instead, the cultural type can be used as a tool for administrators attempting to understand and redirect an agency's underlying values that influence organizational behaviors. Given the unique challenges facing public administrators, these local level leaders are likely advocates of the Strategic Culture Framework; however, managers must first evaluate their agency's core tasks to determine if this culture type is appropriate relative to their specific goals. For example, an agency whose primary task is the production of goods might be better served by a more hierarchical culture valuing standardized processes and quality control. The shift to the more adaptive model will require also require commitment to a gradual and long-term development process. Chapter 5 will review the concept of momentum building, discuss strategies for developing the Strategic Culture Framework, and speak to the specific implementation challenges associated with public agencies.

CHAPTER 5: INITIATING AND SUSTAINING A CULTURE SHIFT

“It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things.”—John Kotter

Chapter 1 identified consequences of ineffective organizational culture and Chapter 2 outlined the dominant characteristics of strategic-oriented agencies across four academic fields. Subsequently, a deeper analysis of the characteristics facilitated the identification of six critical components that blend both values-based and process-based research in Chapter 3. These six components create the Strategic Culture Framework detailed in Chapter 4 for the purposes of informing administrators what underlying assumptions, values, and beliefs they can begin modeling for their employees in order to induce a shift in the way decisions are made; however, some questions remain. How can an administrator begin assessing his existing organizational culture? What change processes are available to begin initiating a culture shift? What are some barriers to the change processes? While this section does not review change management research in depth, briefly review concepts of momentum building and suggests a simplified change processes executives can utilize to begin redirecting the more intangible characteristics existing in an agency that govern behaviors. Finally, this chapter discusses common barriers to initiating and sustaining change.

THE FLYWHEEL CONCEPT: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE MOMENTUM FOR CHANGE

Since inception of this project, I have been intrigued by Jim Collins’ concept of “the flywheel effect.” A flywheel is a large, horizontally mounted metal disk on an axle purposed for storing rotational energy (White, 1975). These flywheels have significant potentials of inertia, take concerted effort to get going, but then harness immense forward moving energy. The

contraption 1) provides sustained energy, 2) delivers energy at rates beyond a continuous energy source and 3) controls the orientation of a mechanical system (*ibid*). Standing still the apparatus is nearly impossible to move. The flywheel only budes after tremendous, sustained physical effort. When you finally get the wheel to move, you are both physically and mentally exhausted. Just as you consider giving up, the wheel begins to turn faster and inertia takes over. Eventually, flywheel rotations require almost no external force but instead the device is propelled by its own weight (Collins, 2001).

Like the flywheel, both culture development and culture change are difficult to get going. Because individuals cannot acquire values and attitudes overnight, it would be unrealistic to expect organizational changes to take root quickly. Like the flywheel, once momentum is generated (for better or worse) culture is difficult to redirect. Too often administrators and agency personnel expect process-based improvement initiatives to immediately create agency efficiencies and profoundly change the way employees “get the work done”.

Collins (2001) systematically reviewed a list of 1,435 companies to find extraordinary cases that successfully made the difficult leap from mediocre to great results. After the jump to greatness, the company had to generate and sustain cumulative stock returns exceeding general stock market averages three times over for a period of fifteen year (*ibid*). Of those 1,435 companies, only 11 managed to sustain changes that measured up to Collins’ outcome criteria. In each of the 11 cases, the researcher found no miracle moment but instead, found leaders sustaining practical, committed-to-excellence processes (Collins, 2001). In other words, their change leaders (in each case a senior executive) exemplified personal mastery and strategic leadership by avoiding gimmicky change programs. Additionally, these leaders stayed committed to a personal vision and overall company mission during turbulent situations and intense criticism

(Collins, 2001). Results also indicated that momentum-building takes time. On average, it took 10.5 years to accomplish organizational changes that produced the desired outcomes and institutionalize a new agency culture (*ibid*).

This thesis does not claim to submit a quick remedy to cultural ailments facing some agencies but instead views culture as a gradual phenomenon inculcated across agency members through a slow and steady process. Administrators interested in an adaptive, strategic-oriented environment must exert sustained commitment to developing the six components of the Strategic Culture Framework—a particular challenge in government organizations who experience reduced leadership tenures (i.e. elected officials) relative to their private sector counterparts. Leaders must shy away from flashy change programs and motivational stunts; instead, they can focus on slowly pushing the flywheel and consistently building tangible evidence that proves strategies are relevant to delivering desired results.

MOVING THE FLYWHEEL:

CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES IN PRACTICE

“Change is a complex process that must be managed simply or it eludes us.”—Thomas Harvey

After learning organizational culture change is a slow process requiring a continual and disciplined effort to generate a sustaining momentum, this section recommends a simple, circular implementation process (extrapolated from research presented in Appendix B) incorporating assessment, strategy development, implementation, and evaluation displayed by Figure 4.1. Managers can use this process on an ongoing basis to initiate incremental shifts in business practices that will ultimately lead to more profound agency-wide changes in values and attitudes. In other words, leadership should be in a constant state of cultural implementation to effectively embed strategic values capable of producing an agile organization.

Figure 5.1: Circular Culture Change Model



Assess

The framework proposed for managing culture change begins with organizational assessment—a phase that assists administrators in understanding their existing organizational culture context and identify potential initiative champions and resisters. Sun Tzu, a prolific Chinese military general, noted that, “if you do not know others and do not know yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle.” Harvey (2001) stresses the pre-implementation phase as a critical step in diagnosing the needs of any agency. Additionally, the assessment phase exposes agency strengths to avoid exerting energy on Strategic Culture Framework characteristics that are already thriving—as the adage goes “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

1. Cultural Assessment:

In order to inspire change, you must first understand current values, behaviors, and beliefs driving organizational behaviors and decision-making. Appendix C details several cultural

assessment tools valuable for exposing a number of factors driving individual, group and agency norms. Leaders interested in building a strategic culture should consider utilizing both Quinn and Cameron's Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) and Jim Collins' Good to Great Diagnostic Tool ("Diagnostic Tool"). Both assessment tools can also be completed in a proactive manner—respondents can first complete the instrument using current truths and then complete a second assessment by answering with what they would like to see in the organization. Appendix D reveals where the strategic culture type manifests relative to the OCAI quadrants. Similarly, the "Diagnostic Tool" can reveal where the agency lies on principles of disciplined leadership, disciplined thought, and disciplined action. Completion of cultural assessments should assist an administrator in answering the following questions:

- What is the existing culture relative to existing frames (hierarchy, market, clan, adhocracy)?
- How does existing culture compare to the supportive characteristics of the Strategic Culture Framework?
- How is leadership viewed within the agency?
- How is change viewed within the agency?
- What are the basic organizational values?

2. Assessing the People:

This thesis reiterates the importance of investing in "the right people" and developing leadership communities by establishing a cadre of change champions. Assessing the personnel within the agency via stakeholder analysis helps the organization know who its internal and external stakeholders are, what criteria is used to judge the agency, and which individuals are change supporters and change resisters (Bryson, 2004). According to Bryson (2004), stakeholder

analysis consists of a minimum of three basic steps. First, identify all stakeholders—individuals that 1) have a strong influence on the agency culture, 2) individuals with decision-making power, and 3) personnel that will be impacted by the changes. For government entities, stakeholders are numerous and extend beyond internal associates (*ibid*). The next step of a stakeholder analysis involves identifying the criteria driving behavior. Overall, the information gleaned from a stakeholder analysis will help an administrator better understand their people and identify appropriate members for their cadre of change champions. Questions answered through a stakeholder analysis include:

- What/who is driving change?
- Who are the culture setters?
- Who are potential change champions?
- What is the level of trust between the change leaders and staff?
- Who are the change resisters?

In short, a comprehensive organizational assessment phase helps an administrator gain a realistic picture of their existing organizational culture and identifies critical stakeholders. An administrator must meet the organization where it is and identify areas aligned with the strategic culture characteristics relative to areas that require reshaping. In being able to answer the questions of various assessment techniques, critical conditions exposed will influence strategy selection and next steps in the culture change process.

Strategize

After assessing existing organizational circumstances, the administrator is ready to begin strategizing culture shift. The strategy phase begs the question: what aspects of the organization do not align with the desired culture frame and what mechanisms are available to encourage a

shift. Administrators must be willing to acknowledge changes to organizational structures, symbols, systems, leadership styles, and employee skills are necessary to genuinely influence a lasting shift in organizational behaviors. In this phase, leadership must determine which of the previously listed elements they have control over to modify. Taking an executive administrator’s perspective, Table 5.1 outlines strategies specific to each of the six dimensions mentioned in the Strategic Culture Framework.

Table 5.1: Strategic Culture Framework Strategies	
Characteristic	Strategies
Leadership:	
1) Get the right people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluate the types of people required to steer the agency effectively ▪ Set clear personnel expectations ▪ Develop core competencies aligned with vision and mission ▪ Recruit members according to competencies ▪ Provide training opportunities and coach staff ▪ Allow members who cannot support the vision a safe exit (Collins, 2001)
2) Clear Personal Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Define a simplified future objective by asking the following three questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What are the required tasks of my county? b) What influences my county’s ability to fulfill primary objectives? c) What are our core people passionate about? ▪ Confront answers to the above questions honestly ▪ Accept facts regarding existing organizational circumstances ▪ Crystallize vision by continually reevaluating questions (Collins, 2001)
3) Knows when to stop “doing”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify mandated responsibilities ▪ Identify peripheral tasks (non-mandated) ▪ Evaluate peripheral tasks relative to vision and organizational mission ▪ Eliminate non-mandated tasks that do not tightly align with vision ▪ Consider structural realignment (Collins, 2001)

Characteristic	Strategies
Mission-Driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaboratively establish clear agency mission statement that answers: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Who are we? b) Why do we exist? c) What service need do we fulfill ▪ Utilize change champions to model the “stop-doing” principle (Collins, 2001)
Systems Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continually expose interrelationship of tasks to line staff ▪ Map organizational goals against impacted departments ▪ Develop cross-agency teams working towards goal attainment ▪ Foster collaborative environment ▪ Assess feasibility of shared service options
Feedback Loop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a process for monitoring existing programs ▪ Establish clear outcome measures ▪ Modify programs based on feedback ▪ Reinforce value of communication (both vertically and horizontally) by creating multiple feedback avenues like social media platforms, formal forums, all-staff meetings, surveys, focus groups, etc... ▪ Implement “open-door” policy ▪ Create a system where employees know feedback has been received and resulted in some kind of action (Argyris, 1999; Senge, 2006)
Personnel Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Model personal mastery and encourage long-term behavior change ▪ Provide training opportunities to acquire evolving technical, social, communication, and analytical skills ▪ Encourage participation in professional organizations of interest to individuals ▪ Support external extended learning (i.e. pursuit of advanced degrees) ▪ Create a nurturing environment where employees feel safe to practice newly acquired skills, think differently about problems, and implement innovative (and sometimes more risky) solutions ▪ Partner with academic institutions (Senge, 2006; Cameron & Quinn, 2011)

Characteristic	Strategies
Cadre of Change Champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct Stakeholder analysis ▪ Call together 6-12 people who are committed to the process ▪ Ensure those called upon are an eclectic mix of each leader level ▪ Allow identified individuals the choice of participation ▪ Intensively engage participants ▪ Coach cadre to become mentors who model desired agency behavior ▪ Evaluate group efforts on the organization as a whole <p>(Bryson, 2004)</p>

When viewed collectively, applying the suggested strategies is daunting; however, Table 5.1 is instead, intended to demonstrate the many options available to an executive. Ultimately, it is the role of an administrator to actively evaluate the initial culture assessment to determine which culture characteristics require more attention and what strategies can be most appropriately applied within their organization to initiate a shift towards the strategic culture typology.

Implement

Once the organization's current context is understood and change strategies are evaluated, an administrator is now equipped to forcefully begin pushing that giant flywheel. Overall, Cameron & Quinn (2011) identify common steps for implementing culture change and applying the strategies outlined in Table 5.1 involve the following:

1. Reach consensus regarding the existing culture
2. Generate understanding of a the desired culture (i.e. strategic culture)
3. Determine what the changes will mean
4. Identify communication strategy utilizing culture communication mechanisms (outlined in Appendix E)
5. Identify strategic action agenda (drawn from elements in Table 5.1)

6. Identify your low-hanging fruit (i.e. what can be immediately changed)
7. Celebrate small wins
8. Collaboratively determine outcome measures and milestones to ensure accountability

Evaluate

The final phase in managing an initial culture shift involves evaluation or reassessment. A critical component to successful shifts in organizational behaviors is ensuring adequate mechanisms are in place to receive feedback across all agency levels. Considering Yolo County is interested in ensuring their jurisdiction is not only strategic but also agile, evaluation is critical and requires the development of change measures. Cameron and Quinn (2011) suggest answering the following questions to identify culture change metrics:

- What are the key indicators of progress?
- What does success look like?
- How and for what will personnel be held accountable for?
- By what dates will we have documented noticeable change?
- When would we like total change to have occurred?

Ultimately, the evaluation stage closes the initial implementation loop and invites re-assessment of an organization's culture relative to original results. While concepts of project management and measurement can be applied, culture change does not fit tightly into traditional tools. Schein (2004) explains that transitioning from old ways to new ways of doing things is psychologically difficult. Reevaluation will help identify resistance points, monitor progress, and reinforce desired and newly adopted agency norms.

BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Change initiatives, especially those involving innate values, are rarely accomplished without resistance. Senge (1999) and Argyris (2010) discuss inhibitors of change and present strategies for reconciling these barriers. Divided into two categories, this section reviews potential challenges to reshaping culture. Additionally, the characteristics of the Strategic Culture Framework that are capable of mitigating barriers to change are identified to demonstrate the potential power of the culture type. Once an agency values the six characteristics and they become deeply embedded into organizational work life, change barriers become less problematic as strategic agencies are better equipped to self-correct, adapt, and respond more effectively to dynamic environments.

Barriers to Initiating Change

1. Not Enough Time:

Typically, there is constant pressure on leadership and personnel to focus on “the here and now” in lieu of more long-term and less tangible agency drivers. The problem of “not enough time” highlights the critical importance of establishing a cultural norm of diffuse decision-making. Empowering a team of key people to allocate small portions of their day to activities like reflection, planning, collaborative work, and training is critical. Other strategies for this barrier are integrating similar initiatives, scheduling time for focus and concentration, trusting others to control their schedules, eliminating non-essential activities, disciplined to say “no,” and willingness to experiment with time to find right management fit (Senge, 1999)

- Mitigating Characteristics: Deliberate leadership, change champions, mission-driven

2. No Help:

Without quality coaching, guidance, and support, individuals attempting to internalize culture change can quickly become overwhelmed. Additionally, there are often well-established cultural forces that prevent employees from seeking help when needed (Senge, 1999).

Administrators can develop mentorship programs, partner personnel; build coaching into line-level management, and reframe attitudes about requesting assistance to mitigate this barrier.

- Mitigating Characteristic: Deliberate leadership, change champions, personnel development, feedback loop

3. Not Relevant:

People at work want to spend time on immediate business responsibilities—tasks that clearly contribute to their “regular” work. This means meetings (often viewed as extraneous) that focus on fluffy topics like agency vision, mission, etc...are not compelling priorities (Senge, 1999). Impressing relevance for strategic initiatives is the third challenge of initiating culture change. Managers can accomplish relevance by building strategic awareness among change champions, raising questions regarding status quo practices, making information available, tightly link personnel development/training to results, and openly inquiring about personnel perceptions.

- Mitigating Characteristics: Deliberate leadership, change champions, personnel development, feedback loop, systems thinking, mission-driven

4. Walking the Talk:

Too often, executives identify agency weaknesses associated with the organization’s culture (i.e. teamwork) and submit value statements; however, these proclamations do not actually reflect the existing organizational attitudes (Senge, 1999). In order to evade this pitfall, managers can develop values statements collaboratively with diverse personnel; build credibility

by modeling desired behaviors; work with partners; and actively develop a sense of organizational awareness (*ibid*).

- Mitigating Characteristics: Deliberate leadership, change champions, personnel development, feedback loop, systems thinking

Barriers to Sustaining Change:

1. Fear and Anxiety:

The Strategic Culture Framework, drawing from tenants of the learning organization, supports continual self-reflection and encourages honest assessments of existing decision-making processes. Continual questioning of old beliefs and assumptions can produce a level of anxiety because weaknesses are regularly exposed. While a level of fear and anxiety is healthy and demonstrates administrators are on the right track in building a productive tension between what exists and what should exist, it can also create a trust gap between leaders and line-level staff (Senge, 1999). Strategies to maintain a productive level of organizational anxiety include: starting with smaller issues to build momentum to tackle complex problems; set an example of openness; focus on skill development over personalities of employees; emphasize commonality of shared vision; and finally, reinforce fear/anxiety are an expected phase in the process (*ibid*).

- Mitigating Characteristics: deliberate leadership, personnel development, systems thinking, mission-driven

2. Assessment and Measurement:

Individuals are results oriented and expect practical benefits, like enhanced outcomes because of their changed efforts (Senge, 1999). One reoccurring challenge of organizational culture development is that it is difficult to judge 1) if values, assumptions, and beliefs are changed and 2) if those changes are producing better outcomes. Additionally, if there are positive

outcomes produced by a new strategy, it reveals weaknesses in traditional thought-patterns (*ibid*). Consequently, there is an incentive for personnel to subconsciously report self-serving outcome measures. In order to mitigate this second barrier to sustaining a strategic culture, administrators can communicate the time lag associated with profound culture change; collaborate with the cadre of change champions to gain consensus on process measures; celebrate short-term gains to acknowledge progress; and assess of new expectations and skills a priority (*ibid*).

- Mitigating Characteristics: deliberate leadership, change champions, personnel development, systems thinking, feedback loop

In short, revealing common barriers associated with both initiating and sustaining change efforts not only prepares administrators for the challenges ahead but further justifies many components of the Strategic Culture Framework. First, the importance of leadership appears in each barrier, which speaks to the significant role executives play in setting the cultural tone at the top. Strategic leaders are more effectively able to provide a safe and supportive environment for creative problem-solving and innovative solutions. Secondly, agencies navigating change processes are more successful when there is a smaller, dedicated group of individuals who can support the administrator, test strategies and then help communicate new standards across the larger organization (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Finally, elements of individual improvements and personnel mastery expose the value of systems thinking and personnel development in the Strategic Culture Framework.

CONCLUDING IMPLEMENTATION REMARKS

This chapter identified common barriers to change, examined change process options, and discussed the importance of momentum building to sustain lasting and profound culture change. Managers must be willing to accept that culture change requires modifications to

organizational structure, symbols, images, systems, staff, strategies, leadership styles, and managerial skills—strategies that are capable of sending signals to agency members that historical patterns of behavior are no longer productive. The ability to initiate and manage the circular nature of culture change is a leadership prerequisite requiring deliberate, disciplined, and dedicated effort. Furthermore, leaders must assess the existing organizational environment to not only identify areas that do not align with the six characteristics of the Strategic Culture Framework but to also meet individuals where they are. Chapter 6 will discuss future research opportunities and provide final recommendations for Yolo County.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.”—Charles Darwin

Overall, organizational culture is an essential agency ingredient for initiating and sustaining a new way of doing business. Some consider culture as the glue that holds agencies together, while others compare it to a compass providing direction (Christensen, 2006). Defined in Chapter 1 as the shared vision, values, and assumptions, driving organizational behavior and decision-making, culture speaks to the intangible qualities that can work to either actively enhance mission fulfillment or undermine senior executives’ improvement efforts. By identifying cultural characteristics associated with strategic agencies from the literature, this thesis reframes the way in which public administrators perceive organizational culture by presenting a framework conducive for producing agile entities driven by strategic thinking.

Chapter 1 revealed that applying management tools (i.e. strategic planning) without understanding cultural drivers of agency behaviors will only result in temporary changes, explaining why Yolo County’s past planning efforts have sustained little traction in guiding long-term agency decision-making. Additionally, the section revealed consequences of dysfunctional cultural characteristics that insulate individual mental models, sustain stagnant patterns of thinking, and fail to develop double feedback loops. Subsequently, Chapter 2 explored the literature across four organizational administration fields to expose characteristics associated with strategic, agile agencies and then identified similarities across disciplines.

Chapter 3 analyzed the existing literature and submitted a rationale for the construction of a strategic culture type that blends both values-based and process-based research. Echoing concepts of a learning organization and incorporating change-driving components, the six

characteristics included in the Strategic Culture Framework are leadership, mission-driven, systems thinking, feedback loop, personnel development, and change champions. Active development of the strategic culture type assists administrators in reshaping the way individuals, groups, and departments make decisions. Finally, Chapter 5 reviewed concepts of momentum building, recommended a circular implementation model, and identified barriers to organizational culture change.

Future Research Opportunities

Cameron and Quinn (2011) argue that no one theory can comprehensively incorporate and explain the inherent complexities and interrelationships of organizational culture. Additionally, the ambiguous nature of the subject makes it difficult to argue one culture framework right and the other wrong. While the Strategic Culture Framework was developed by extensively reviewing the existing research to tease out similarities associated with strategic organizations, the framework has not been empirically validated through a set of standardized assessment tools. Consequently, researchers and practitioners could point to contradictory, anecdotal evidence that would support a separate set of factors capable of creating agile and strategic agencies.

Because this thesis has presented a theoretically based framework, there are many opportunities for future research. First, an empirical meta-analysis would provide quantitative information regarding the effects of each characteristic on performance holding all other factors constant. Meta-analysis is a statistically based research technique referring to the study of existing research (Glass, 1979). By using statistical analysis of a large collection of results across individual studies, meta-analysis can integrate the findings and measure the magnitudes of impact

of independent variables on the dependent variable (*ibid*). This technique would empirically determine the validity of each variable incorporated into the Strategic Culture Framework.

A second research possibility includes case study research. The case study method is a common tool in social science research and arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena within an individual unit (Yin, 2009). Options under this research method involve selecting a case study site (i.e. a county interested in implementing the Strategic Culture Framework). Once a site is selected, outcome measures are defined and pre-implementation assessment conducted. A structured process for implementing elements of the culture type is selected and then routine reassessment is conducted over a long period of time to measure 1) the existence of strategic culture characteristics and 2) their effects on the outcome measure(s) (*ibid*).

Finally, a comparative case study can be conducted across several similar agencies. This type of research can compare organizations choosing to proactively develop strategic culture characteristics against agencies that do not deliberately implement the Strategic Culture Framework. Ultimately, comparative research should demonstrate that organizations who implement the Strategic Culture Framework outperform (established through a predetermined outcome measure) similar organizations that do not exhibit the strategic culture type.

Final Recommendations to Yolo County Administrators

Since the inception of this project, Yolo County has initiated a strategic planning process to develop a three-year road map that will guide agency activities to accomplish eight identified county goals. Serving as an example of reshaping culture through a process-based approach, the purpose of this effort is to strategically plan for desired long-term outcomes. Historically, the jurisdiction's strategic plans have been unable to influence long-term business practices. Looking to change planning outcomes, leadership implemented a more deliberate process that engaged

personnel both vertically and horizontally. First, surveys regarding agency values were distributed to all personnel, where each member of the agency had an opportunity to indicate what was important to them. Next steps involved incorporating survey input to craft strategic goals. Each strategic goal was assigned a “Champion” to then build an action-oriented “tactical plan” for accomplishing the assigned goal—champions were subsequently required to solicit additional employee feedback via diverse focus groups. While the process itself has not concluded, administrators are signaling a new way of doing business.

Unlike past planning efforts, the 2012 initiative has worked to build a cadre of change champions and incorporate broader organizational levels to ensure redrafted values, vision, and mission statements accurately reflect the agency. Furthermore, leadership has indicated all departments will be held accountable to the identified goals and the accompanying “measures of success.” Yolo County’s process-change signals to agency members that collaboration, strategic-thinking, and outcomes are valued within the agency and reflect the way in which services should be provided.

While the new strategic planning process is already incorporating strategic culture elements like leadership, systems thinking, and change champions, the organization must continually demonstrate feedback is influencing decision making in order to continue the existing momentum. Several focus group discussions revealed employees yearn for increased communication avenues and engagement by the executive team. Leadership can also consider expanding the existing “champion” group beyond only department heads by developing cross-agency teams to 1) institutionalize feedback processes; 2) encourage continued learning within individual units; 3) continually communicate the future vision; 4) eliminate periphery (non-

mandated) activities that do not tightly align with both the vision and mission; and 5) establish evaluation dates to ensure objectives are met.

Final recommendations to Yolo County executives interested in “changing the way we do things” involve taking a step back from the process-based activities of strategic planning and focusing on the value-based forces underlying the agency’s behaviors. Five recommendations include:

1. Assessment: Utilize existing (and free) organizational assessment tools like the OCAI and the Diagnostic to identify the existing cultural values and assumptions guiding decision-making, processes, and agency outcomes. Compare assessment results against the Strategic Values Framework (Appendix D) to understand the relationship to the Strategic Culture Framework.
2. Identify cultural strengths: Culture assessments will reveal what strategic culture characteristics (if any) currently exist. Promoting these strengths will motivate personnel and identify possibilities for immediate successes in your cultural reshaping endeavors.
3. Strategize around characteristic weaknesses: Assessments will also reveal components of the Strategic Culture Framework that require greater effort, investment, and development. Administrators must strategize change initiatives (refer to table 5.1) around these characteristics.
4. Employ the circular implementation model: Culture change is difficult and requires incremental but continuous change to build momentum necessary to push the flywheel forward. Constant application of the circular model will institutionalize the incremental shaping of organizational culture.
5. Be patient: Reshaping personal and organizational values is no easy endeavor and requires long-term commitments and a willingness to eliminate periphery tasks. Dramatic results

do not necessarily require a dramatic process. Administrators must be patient and accept that genuine culture change and the institutionalization of strategic thinking takes years (not weeks or months). Emphasis on short-term wins becomes essential to demonstrate the positive effects of implemented changes while continuing to build forward momentum.

Concluding Remarks

Intended to provide administrators a theoretical basis for understanding a retooled culture frame, this document serves as a platform for moving forward with culture change as a proactive mechanism for shifting agency values towards strategic thinking. Understanding the Strategic Culture Frameworks' six characteristics will equip administrators with an ability to assess existing agency values against desired norms. Particularly suitable for public agencies, the deliberate development of this culture type will disrupt status-quo patterns of thinking by rewarding the critical review of processes for the purposes of system-wide improvements.

Ultimately, organizational culture is a juxtaposing construct. Culture can be one of the most powerful tools that a skilled manager can wield or act as the most vexing barrier to managing change. Considering it is unrealistic for an administrator to be involved in every decision, routine task, hiring of personnel, etc..., they must rely on underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions to guide individual decision making across the agency. The role of an executive is to communicate priorities and indicate accepted patterns of behavior that enable individuals to make decisions in the organization that are consistent with the vision, mission, and goals of the agency.

The Strategic Culture Framework is neither a one-size-fits-all approach to managing organizations nor the solution for the many maladies facing public organizations today. Instead, the theoretical approach is intended to produce a more agile agency through six strategic culture characteristics that can improve long-term decision-making and meet the needs of changing

service demands. In conclusion, organizational culture is an important factor for institutionalizing a desired change. Many organizations, like Yolo County, have embraced a variety of management tools designed to develop long-term strategies to improve outcomes; unfortunately, process-based strategies alone fail to gain traction across dynamic organizational units. Proactively developing the Strategic Culture Framework within an agency will facilitate organizational commitment to systemic changes, making agency improvements capable of outliving individual champions or planning processes. Reshaping an agency's culture is about "changing the way we do business" and guiding instinctive individualized actions that take the organization where the manager wants to go.

APPENDIX A: QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Appendix A: Qualities of Effective Leadership	
Author	Qualities
Ancona, D., <i>et al.</i> (2008)	<p>Sense making: constantly understanding changes in the business environment and interpreting their ramifications</p> <p>Relating: Building trusting relationships; balancing advocacy, inquiry with listening; develops a network of confidants</p> <p>Visioning: creating credible and compelling images for the agency's future direction</p> <p>Inventing: creating new ways of thinking and approaching tasks</p>
Bennis and Thomas (2002)	<p>Engage others in shared meaning</p> <p>A distinctive, compelling voice</p> <p>Integrity</p> <p>Adaptive capacity—an ability to grasp context and make course corrections</p>
Collins, J. (2001)	<p>Disciplined People: leaders focus on the “who” before the “what aligning personnel with agency vision</p> <p>Disciplined Thought: able to take complexities and boil them down into simple, yet profound ideas (Hedgehog concept)</p> <p>Disciplined Action: unyielding discipline to stop doing anything and everything that doesn't fit tightly with the vision</p>
Drucker, P. (2004)	<p>Ask what needs to be done</p> <p>Ask what's right for the enterprise</p> <p>Develops action plans</p> <p>Takes responsibility for decision making</p> <p>Takes responsibility for communicating</p> <p>Focuses on opportunities not problems</p> <p>Runs productive meetings</p> <p>Think and say “We” not “I”</p>
Goleman, D. (2010).	<p>Self-awareness: knowing one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, goals</p> <p>Self-regulation: controlling or redirecting disruptive behavior</p> <p>Motivation: being driven by achievement</p> <p>Empathy: considering others' feelings when making decisions</p> <p>Social Skill: managing relationships to move people in desired directions</p>
Heifetz and Laurie (2002)	<p>Direction: define problems and provide solutions</p> <p>Protection: Shield the organization from external threats</p> <p>Orientation: clarify roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Managing Conflict: let conflict emerge but then restore order</p> <p>Shaping Norms: challenge unproductive norms and reinforce positive norms</p>
Kotter, J. (2001)	<p>Sets a direction: results in visions and the overarching strategies for realizing them</p> <p>Aligns people: involves looking for the right fit between people and the vision and then aligning those people with the right job</p> <p>Motivate and inspire: through high energy and charisma attempts to stir a sense of belonging and self-esteem</p>

APPENDIX B: ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE PROCESSES

Appendix B: Organizational Change Processes Distinguished by Author				
Kotter (1995)	*Fernandez and Rainey (2006)	*Blase and Fixen (2003)	Collins, J. (2001)	Cameron & Quinn (2011)
Establish a sense of urgency	Identify and ensure there is a need for change	Identify the organizational change need	Build momentum for change	Reach consensus regarding existing culture
Form a coalition of change leaders	Provide a strategic plan	Identify strategies to meet needs	Assess employee fit to agency mission and vision	Determine what change will and will not mean
Create vision	Identify Internal Stakeholders and Resistance Points	Educate and engage broad-based stakeholders	Define a clear vision and mission	Identify stories illustrating future cultures
Communicate vision	Build manager support and commitment	Build system-wide support for strategies	Build a cadre of committed, agency-wide leaders	Identify a strategic action agenda
Empower others to act on vision	Build external support	Implement change	Practice discipline towards selected strategy	Identify immediate, small wins
Celebrate short term successes to build momentum	Identify needed resources and build capacity	Integrate system-wide feedback loop	Eliminate efforts that do not supporting vision	Identify leadership implication
Consolidate improvements and continue changing policies that do not adhere to vision	Institutionalize change through cultural mechanisms and feedback loop	Embed innovations discovered through process into culture	Embrace technology accelerators	Identify evaluation metrics and communicate strategy
Institutionalize change via cultural mechanisms	Pursue comprehensive change (i.e. integrates change across primary system and impacted subsystems)	Reassess organizational needs post-implementation of change	Institutionalize change through continual learning	Identify evaluation metrics and communicate strategy

* indicates study primarily focuses on public sector change processes

APPENDIX C: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Appendix C: Reviewing Organizational Culture Assessment Tools							
Name	Dimensions and Measures	Item	Scale	Strengths	Limitations	Comments	Reference
Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI)	6 key aspects: Dominant characteristics Leadership Management of employees Strategic emphasis Criteria for success Analysis of the 6 factors produces 4 culture types: Hierarchy Market Clan Adhocracy	24	After responding to a series of scenario questions, respondents divide 100 points over a number of descriptions that correspond to culture types	High validity (both face and inter-rater reliability); strong theoretical basis assessing both strength and congruence of culture; tested across a wide range of industries;	Some argue tool is too simplistic with only 6 dimensions; narrow classification of organizational types (4 only)	Based on the Competing Values Framework (CVF) and originally developed for educational agencies	Cameron & Quinn (2011)
Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI)	12 thinking styles of individuals within a group: Humanistic-helpful Affiliative Approval Conventional Dependent Avoidant Oppositional Power Competitive Competence Achievement Self-actualization	120	Based on a 5-point Likert-scale	Widely used, strong face validity and good use of illustrations	Assessment is lengthy and complex; some costs required for purchase of instrument	Strong psychological basis and has been tested across a wide variety of industries	Cooke (1993)

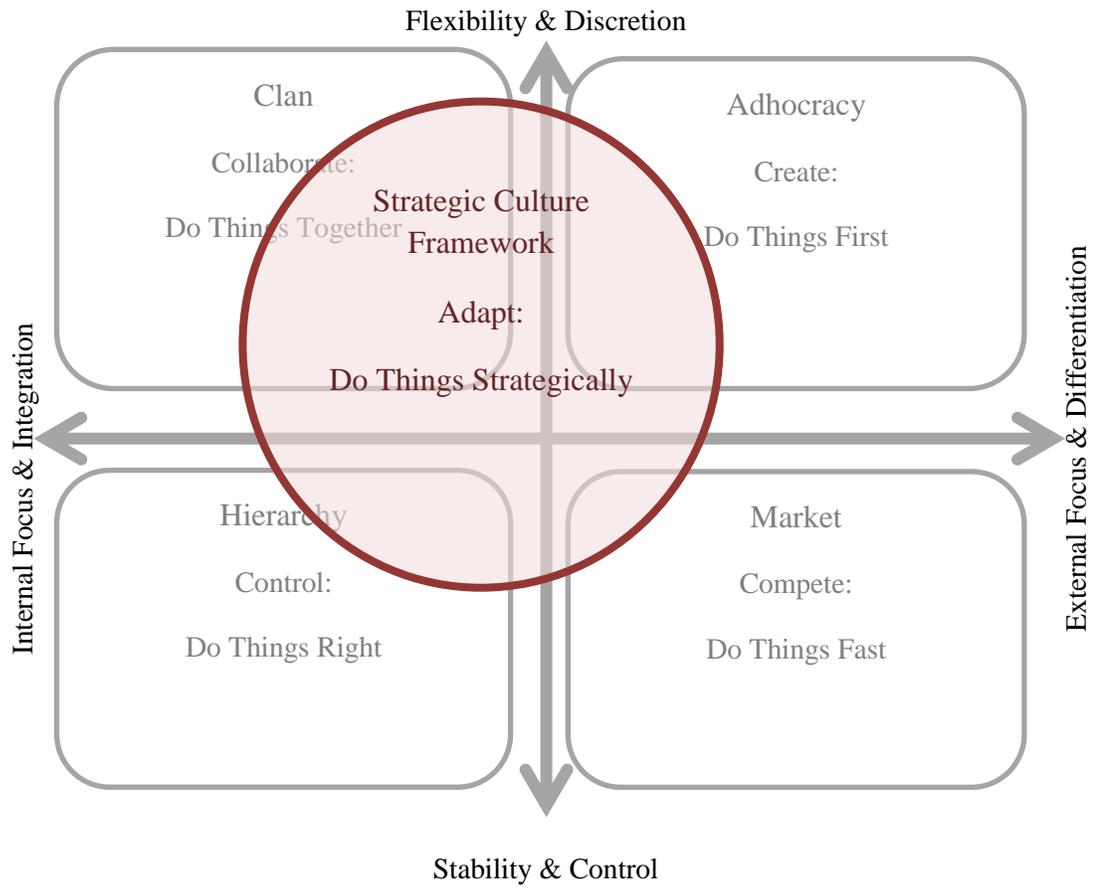
Appendix C: Reviewing Organizational Culture Assessment Tools

Name	Dimensions and Measures	Item	Scale	Strengths	Limitations	Comments	Reference
Harrison's Organizational Ideology Questionnaire	Organizational orientation to power, roles, tasks, and individuals is assessed	50	Based on a 6-point Likert-scale	Addresses both existing and preferred culture types; strong face validity	No norms have been collected and reliability has not been assessed	Primarily a private sector organizational assessment tool	Harrison (1975)
MacKenzie's Culture Questionnaire	12 key dimensions: Employee commitment Attitudes towards Innovation Attitudes towards change Style of conflict resolution Management style Confidence in leadership Openness/trust Teamwork Action orientation HR- orientation Consumer orientation	76	Respondents check statements that is more true of their organization	Easy to complete, does not require significant time	Weak theoretical basis; no validity results have been reported	Developed to assess organizational culture within hospitals	MacKenzie (1995)
Good to Great Diagnostic Tool ("Diagnostic Tool")	Based on several factors: Leadership Personnel Organizational Purpose Perception of climate Data-driven decisions Adherence of vision Approaches to change Disciplined people Disciplined thought Disciplined action Sustainability	100	Respondents select a letter grade (A-F) to rate their organization across a series of statements; letters are then assigned a point value to determine the organizational trajectory	Strong face validity against proposed theoretical framework	Neither norms nor reliability data has been provided; limited to assessing one aspect of organizational culture	Designed for entrepreneurs and organizational professionals looking to improve performance; Purposed to support one theory of effective organizations	Collins (2006)

*Adapted from Scott, *et al.* (2003).

APPENDIX D: STRATEGIC CULTURE FRAMEWORK COMPARED TO THE OCAI

*adapted from Cameron & Quinn (2011)



APPENDIX E: MECHANISMS FOR COMMUNICATING CULTURE

Appendix E: Mechanisms for Communicating Culture		
Tool	Description	Example
Symbols	Physical objects, emblems, settings, and roles within an organization provide a distinct sense of identity	Uniforms, name badges, logos, office design, McDonald's golden arches, Starbucks' sea witch, the U.S. Pentagon, California's golden poppy, etc...
Language	Jargon, slang, jokes, mottos that carry the cultural message	Law enforcement agencies speaking in terms of the penal code; medical professionals using scientific terminology; and public servants easily acquainted with an endless list of acronyms.
Stories/Myths	Narratives repeated throughout an agency overtime to convey information about an organization's history and practices (often portrays founders or employees as heroes embodying specific values)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Southwest Airlines originated as an idea sketched on a napkin to later overcome a series of lawsuits. That story is retold to instill a spirit of steadfastness and survival. ▪ A heroic Nordstrom's employee notices a customer left an airline ticket on the counter. After a phone call to the airline failed, the employee hopped in a taxi to deliver the ticket—a story told during new-hire customer service training.
Events	Repeated practices, special events, ceremonies, etc...socialize, stabilize, and convey messages to internal and external constituents.	Graduation events, initiation events for new hires, promotion/retirement celebrations, annual meetings, annual banquets,
Formal Statements	Mission and vision statements, written philosophy and code of ethics indicate agency priorities, help define performance standards, and guide decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Leaders in vibrant, safe, and healthy communities"—Yolo County, CA ▪ "People working together as a global enterprise for aerospace leadership"—Boeing ▪ "To reach to new heights and reveal the unknown so that what we do and learn will benefit humankind."- NASA ▪ "offer the customer the best possible service, selection, quality, value"—Nordstrom
*Sources: Schein, 2004; Bolman and Deal, 2008; and Rainey, 2009		

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