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In Praise of Bureaucracy?

A Dissent From Australia

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This article explores whether bureaucracy creates alienation, through a case study of the Australian Public Service. By examining the structural determinants of seven job characteristics, it shows that alienation is generated by six features of bureaucracy: its clerical work, control imperative, organizational structures, impersonality, instrumental rationality, and language. The author argues that by de-bureaucratizing and closely aligning individual and organizational goals we can reduce alienation and increase worker productivity. The author concludes that by enabling civil servants to be efficient, equitable, nonpartisan, and accountable, bureaucracy does safeguard liberal democracy, but that in so doing it also generates alienation or "psychic entropy."

Keywords: *alienation; bureaucracy; flow*

The claim that bureaucracy generates alienation has been persistently advanced by a wide range of social theorists and social scientists. Both Marx and Weber, for example, argued that bureaucracy was a source of alienation. For Marx, such alienation could be overcome once private ownership of the means of production was abolished, since bureaucracy was but a specific instance of the general process of alienation within capitalist societies that arose from the existence of private property and class domination (Mouzelis, 1975). For Weber, by contrast, the roots of alienation lay not in private ownership of the means of production per se, but in the separation of the individual from the means of production and administration that occurs within all bureaucratic organizations, whether these are privately or publicly owned (Mommsen, 1989). Writing in the 1950s, social scientists such as Mills (1953) and Argyris (1957) endorsed the view that bureaucracy and formal organization created alienation and psychological dysfunction. Management gurus such as Peters and Waterman (1982) and Kanter (1990) have more recently argued that bureaucracy jeopardizes people's autonomy and their opportunities for self-fulfillment. As du Gay (2000) observes, it is the perceived failure of bureaucracy to open up people's

personal involvement and ideals that comes in for the most severe criticism from such writers. In particular, they attribute a perceived lack of work commitment, motivation, and identification amongst the bureaucratic workforce to the failure of bureaucracy to engage the self-fulfilling impulses of its members. Accordingly, such critics advocate the de-bureaucratization of public and private sector organizations and their replacement by more organic and flexible forms of organization staffed by those of a proactive or entrepreneurial disposition, rather than by the seemingly inert and detached bureaucrats of the past.

Many writers have questioned this negative portrayal of bureaucracy, though. For example, du Gay argues that by enforcing a separation of personal and official business, bureaucracy gives rise to an *ethos of office* that enshrines such virtues as procedural conformity, vocational commitment, and subordination to authority. These bureaucratic virtues enable the civil service to safeguard citizens' rights and to retain its integrity and nonpartisanship, and thereby to reinforce liberal democracy. He argues that bureaucracy should accordingly be praised for buttressing personal freedom rather than pilloried for undermining it. He also challenges the claim that bureaucracy permits inefficiency, waste, and inertia by failing to provide opportunities for self-realization and personal involvement. Instead, he argues that by subscribing to an ethos of vocational devotion, bureaucrats can become more efficient, equitable, ethical, and accountable. Preston (1987) similarly argues that by providing people with the resources and abilities to make conscious deliberate decisions, bureaucracy creates the conditions of freedom. Empirical research also challenges the idea that bureaucracy generates alienation. For example, it was found that teachers in highly bureaucratic systems had a significantly higher, not lower, sense of power than did those in less bureaucratic systems (Moeller & Charters, 1966); that a direct relationship did not exist between bureaucratization and alienation among paid workers, salaried managers, and businessmen (Bonjean & Grimes, 1970); that people who worked in bureaucratic organizations were more intellectually flexible, open to new experience, and self-directed than those who worked in nonbureaucratic organizations (Kohn, 1971); that formalization did not have the inexorable effect of generating alienation among professionals (Organ & Greene, 1981); and that *contra* Lipsky, street level bureaucrats did not exhibit extreme job dissatisfaction (Thomas & Johnson, 1991).

In this article I will explore the question of whether bureaucracy generates alienation, by studying the experience of work among staff of the Australian Public Service (APS). I will define alienation as being the

absence of personal involvement in and fulfillment from work, or what Marx called “self-estrangement” (Mills, 1953; Blauner, 1964; Fox, 1971). It therefore represents the opposite of what the literature on industrial psychology calls *job involvement* (Fox, 1971; Organ & Greene, 1981). According to Marx, self-estrangement arises when people are unable to express themselves through their work and to develop their mental and creative energies. It therefore resembles the mental state that Csikszentmihalyi (1991) labels *psychic entropy* and which he contrasts with what he calls *flow*. Flow arises when we can pursue personal goals and use our skills when performing challenging tasks that provide us with rules, clear goals, intrinsic rewards, immediate feedback, and the ability to exercise control and to concentrate deeply. When in a state of flow we fully use our skills and engage in self-expression, creativity, and learning, and thereby increase our levels of mental order and psychic energy. By contrast, psychic entropy arises when we are unable to pursue our personal goals and to fully use our skills. We therefore experience decreased levels of mental order and psychic energy. Personal skills and task challenges can each vary independently from “low” to “high.” Four possible combinations of skill and challenge therefore arise, each of which yields a particular psychological state. These combinations and associated states (in parentheses) are as follows: high skill and low challenge (*boredom*), low skill and low challenge (*apathy*), high skill and high challenge (*flow*), and low skill and high challenge (*anxiety*). Boredom, apathy, and anxiety all represent forms of psychic entropy.

The analyses of alienation provided by Marx, Mills (1953), and Blauner (1964) address not only the subjective experience of work but also the objective or structural factors that underlie this experience. To understand alienation therefore is to show how the subjective experience of work is generated by structural factors. As Rogers (1995) has noted, the concept of alienation can be most fruitfully employed when it is used to demonstrate how the structural conditions of work influence the subjective experience of work. Personal experience, job characteristics, and structural conditions can be identified as dependent, intervening, and independent variables respectively. The connection between these three levels of analysis has been explored by Hackman and Lloyd Suttle (1977) in their *job characteristics* model. It maintains that high internal work motivation and high job satisfaction are the products of five job characteristics—namely, autonomy, skill variety, task identity, task significance, and feedback—that are in turn a product of technology and job design. I will use this model to analyze the experience of work in the APS. I will also analyze two additional job

characteristics—namely, skill utilization and self-expression. The former is the extent to which a job provides opportunities for the use of skills, whereas the latter is the extent to which a job provides opportunities for skill use, learning, interesting work, and creativity. Both of these job characteristics predict levels of job involvement (Jans & McMahon, 1989).

The APS is a collection of 82 administrative agencies that are staffed under the federal Public Service Act. It has about 112,000 ongoing employees and conforms perfectly to Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy. More than half of APS staff work in the three largest agencies: Centrelink, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), and the Department of Defence. APS staff perform a variety of clerical, managerial, professional, and technical tasks. Seventy-two percent of staff are employed in the clerical-administrative classifications, of which the largest is the Administrative Service Officers (ASOs; prior to 1984, the fourth and third divisions). ASOs are ranked in ascending order from Grades 1 to 6. Above the ASOs are the Senior Officer Grades (SOGs) which are ranked from C to A. Above the SOGs are the elite Senior Executive Service (SES; prior to 1984, the second division). The study draws on four sources of data: personal experience and observation, surveys, interviews, and documentary sources. Personal experience was acquired during the course of 3.5 years' employment as a graduate recruit and clerical administrative officer in two APS departments (Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce or DITAC, and the Public Service Board) between 1984 and 1988. Semistructured, in-depth interviews with 20 serving or former public servants, selected by means of incidental and snowball sampling, were also conducted. The third data source comprises a number of staff surveys, including three departmental surveys conducted in the early 1990s, two service-wide surveys conducted in 1975 and 1992, and a number of surveys of ATO staff conducted by Jans and McMahon (1988), Jans, Frazer-Jans, and McMahon (1989), and Jans and Frazer-Jans (1992). The fourth data source comprises various secondary sources. These include a participant observation study by Jordan (1974), a number of government reports, a 93-page document containing 1,314 comments made by 768 ATO staff, academic studies, and various case studies.

The Nature and Extent of Alienation Among the APS Workforce

In this section I will seek to ascertain the nature and extent of alienation among the members of the APS workforce. Jans and Frazer-Jans (1992)

used a measure of job involvement in their surveys of ATO staff. They define this as the level of identification that workers have with a job and the extent to which they take it seriously and are committed to doing it well. As Blauner (1964) noted, the essence of self-estrangement lies in a depersonalized detachment from work tasks as opposed to an immediate involvement or engrossment in them. Job involvement also measures *intrinsic motivation*, or the desire to perform well in the job for its own sake. For Marx, Mills (1953), and Blauner, the absence of such intrinsic motivation was a key attribute of alienation. Jans and Frazer-Jans found that in 1992, 21% of staff in the ATO had strong job involvement, 29% had moderate job involvement, and 50% had low job involvement. Similar findings obtained from earlier surveys led Jans, Frazer-Jans, et al. (1989) to conclude:

> [ATO staff are] by our definition, dissatisfied with their jobs. . . . Job satisfaction levels for ASO 1 to 3 and even ASO 4 to 6 are very low indeed. Job involvement levels for ASO 1 to 3 are even more disturbing; a majority of them are disinterested in, and may even be alienated from, their jobs. (pp. 6, 31)

Of my 20 informants for example, 6 reported that their work had been largely devoid of intrinsic rewards, while 7 reported that their work had been intrinsically rewarding and unrewarding in roughly equal measure. Many noted that in the absence of intrinsic rewards they found it difficult to remain motivated. As one observed, “It’s hard to be totally enthusiastic about work that’s inherently mundane.” He added, “I don’t particularly enjoy the work environment . . . I don’t put all of my efforts into it.” A senior APS official (McCallum, 1984, p. 344) likewise reports, “From my observation over a number of years many public servants can become highly motivated and work extremely hard if they find the work interesting. . . . Correspondingly, as a general rule, it is difficult to motivate staff if the work is dull, appears pointless or seems to lack value to society as a whole.” I experienced acute boredom when I was at work because my job required limited skills and provided few intrinsic rewards. Many of my workmates were also bored and manifested a palpable lack of enthusiasm for work. Most would eagerly engage in conversation and celebrate birthdays and other rites of passage such as staff welcomes, promotions, and farewells, because these provided oases of color and excitement in an otherwise boring and uneventful day. As a tax officer observed, “If you came to work and it was just a sea of faces, you would hate to come and that would make the day very long” (quoted in Jans & McMahon, 1988, p. 82). Surveys confirm that many APS staff have little interest in their work and engage in it reluctantly. For example, 31% of

staff in the department of Primary Industries and Energy (DPIE) were unwilling to agree that “it’s important to me how well DPIE performs,” while 37% of staff declined to endorse the statement “I am willing to put in effort to help DPIE” (Matheson, 1992).

On certain occasions my workmates’ sense of alienation was clearly apparent. During one power failure, for example, a festive atmosphere emerged in the office and many of my workmates were visibly disappointed when the power was restored. On another occasion, during a heat wave, many gathered eagerly around a thermometer to see if the temperature had risen to the level at which occupational health and safety rules excused them from attending work. My workmates were often reluctant to leave official lunches and return to work. I once returned after a lunchtime barbecue to a largely deserted office. The absence of supervisors also provided opportunities to avoid work. When our section head was absent for the day I absconded with my supervisor to the National Press Club to spend the afternoon playing pool. Informants likewise reported that many of their workmates disliked work and sought to avoid it, especially those who had worked at junior levels. One declared, “Overwhelmingly most people just tolerated it. . . . You couldn’t find anyone apart from a handful of people who really enjoyed it; it was just something that they had to do.” Another noted, “I think there were a lot of people who were bored out of their brains.” Another reported, “The Monday morning, ‘Oh it’s work again,’ you know, ‘God I hate this place,’ everybody you’d talk to, ‘God, you know.’” The Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration (RCAGA; 1976, Vol. 3) found that many junior staff obtained few intrinsic rewards from their work. Under such conditions, it is not surprising that they should seek to avoid work and to leave the office as early as possible. As Marx (in Tucker, 1972, p. 60) noted, the alienated character of work is revealed in the fact that “as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, it is shunned like the plague.” For example, Jordan (1974) reported that “one has no feeling that people find their work intrinsically absorbing, interesting, pleasurable or exciting” and that “it is saddening to see bright young people visibly bored by their jobs, so little involved that one can literally set his watch by their mass departure from the office at precisely six minutes past five” (pp. 417, 420). I also found that I was acutely conscious of the passage of time because I wanted it to pass as quickly as possible. Blauner (1964) argues that the essence of self-estrangement lies in a depersonalised detachment as opposed to an immersion in the present. This is because, where activity is a means to an end rather than an end in itself, there is a heightened awareness of time, since the satisfaction lies in the

future rather than in the present. He maintains that the best measure of this would be "clockwatching." Csikszentmihalyi (1991) likewise argues that obliviousness to the passage of time and a sense of being totally immersed in an activity are the key attributes of flow.

Not all of my co-workers were bored, though. An equally large number were apathetic, because they were content to perform unchallenging work. Informants and ATO officers reported likewise (see Jans, Frazer-Jans, et al., 1989, Appendix 4). Hackman and Lloyd Suttle argue that those individuals with limited needs for psychological growth exhibit apathy rather than boredom when performing an unchallenging job. For example, although 66% of fourth division officers reported that their jobs were "routine," only 34% thought that their jobs had "too little variety." Indeed, 28% maintained that finding the job to be "not too demanding" was a very or somewhat important reason for remaining in the public service (RCAGA, 1976, Vol. 3). Security of employment is the most important reason why people join the APS (RCAGA, 1976, Vol. 3). For example, Probert and Hack (1991) found that APS workers in routine jobs were overwhelmingly satisfied (although they expressed mixed feelings about the intrinsic nature of the work) since they were grateful to have secure employment. As Mintzberg (1979) notes, workers with strong needs for security and with a low tolerance for ambiguity prefer jobs that are highly formalized and bureaucratized. Such workers find their way into bureaucratic structures. By contrast, those workers who desire flexibility and can tolerate ambiguity tend to seek out organic structures.

The high incidence of apathy among APS staff may be attributed to the fact that people with limited needs for psychological growth self-select for employment in bureaucratic organizations. This is manifested in the high level of turnover that occurs among new staff. For example, in 1988, 11% of APS permanent staff with less than one year's service and 8% of those with between one and three year's service resigned (Public Service Commission, 1989). High staff turnover is officially attributed to a "poor job fit, resulting in young workers seeking another more satisfying and rewarding job" (Joint Committee of Public Accounts [JCPA], 1993, Submission No. 72, p. 18). Public servants surveyed by the RCAGA (1976, Vol. 3) likewise thought that finding the job "to be uninteresting" was the most important reason why people left the public service. Out of 15 personal acquaintances that left the public service, for example, 10 did so for precisely this reason. Since boredom arises when people's skills exceed their task requirements, it is likely that many of those who leave the APS are highly skilled. For example, APS recruits who obtain high scores on the clerical selection test (essentially an

intelligence test) are more likely to leave the public service early in their careers than are those with relatively low scores (RCAGA, 1976, Vol. 3). Since those who remain in the APS tend to have lower levels of intellectual ability, it is more likely that they would exhibit apathy rather than boredom when performing an unchallenging job.

Bored and apathetic workers lack involvement in their work and undertake it only in response to external incentives. Jans, Frazer-Jans, et al. (1989) found that levels of job satisfaction indirectly determined levels of self-reported work effort and performance among ATO staff. Research shows that productivity correlates with job satisfaction if the level of work effort is discretionary (Argyle, 1987). As Marx (in Tucker, 1972, p. 60) observed, alienation arises where work "is not voluntary, but coerced." For example, some APS officers who were officially obliged to attend a university diploma course reported that they lacked the motivation or incentive to learn, since they had been given no choice about undertaking it in the first place. As they pointed out, it was "essentially a work activity" (JCPA, 1993, Submission No. 105, p. S 2074). For Marx, an alienation from human nature occurs when workers are unable to develop their mental and creative energies. An alienated worker "does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind" (in Tucker, 1972, p. 60). Csikszentmihalyi (1991) likewise argues that psychic entropy occurs when we fail to fully use and develop our skills and mental capacities. For example, Jans and McMahon (1988) found that 64% of staff at the ASO 1 to 3 levels (then comprising half of all ATO staff) had only moderate or inadequate opportunities to undergo "psychological growth." They define this as the ability "to use and develop skills, to experience challenge and to do interesting work on the job" (p. 32).

We may attribute the absence of such opportunities to the fact that junior staff largely perform unskilled clerical tasks such as filing, sorting, rearranging random columns of numbers, photocopying, proofreading, collating, checking, transcribing, and enveloping. My own job largely consisted of such tasks. I found performing them to be a stultifying experience that induced mental atrophy. When I resumed academic work after spending four years in the APS I initially found it to be difficult since I had lost the habit of using my mind. Ethnographic and survey data shows that low discretion work generates passivity, boredom, and poor mental health (Alvesson, 1987; Donaldson, 1991). One informant reported that her clerical job had required virtually no skill. Her workplace had accordingly been labeled "the veggie patch" by staff since "you'd nearly have to be brain dead to work there." Another informant reported, "It saps you, particularly in a job

like this where there's very little room for initiative or personal judgment or to develop skills. . . . One of the Menzies [Hotel] bars was called the Trophy Bar, and it was decorated with heads and spears, but I used to think of it as the Atrophy Bar." One noted that work generally had a "negative effect" on people because the public service was "a stifling environment that killed enthusiasm . . . people joined the public service with high ideals, but over time these were lost." A former department head (Renouf, 1979, p. 510) likewise maintains, "There is a constant pattern of intellectual atrophy in the department, so that many officers when 45 or so have not fulfilled their early promise."

As the RCAGA (1976, p. 41) found, those APS officers engaged in routine work were in "a field of employment marked by frustration and, as the years pass, by disillusion, bitterness and simple deterioration." Like Jordan (1974), I had used the term "living death" to describe the torpid and dispirited state of such workers. Oakley (1994) similarly titled an article in which he recounted his experience of work within an APS department "The Working Dead." An informant likewise observed, "That's what I thought constantly about the whole place, they're not actively involved in life, they're just going through the motions . . . just the whole thing, they're existing, they're not living." These comments mirror those of the Chairman of the RCAGA and Australia's most renowned public servant, Dr. H. C. ("Nugget") Coombs (1977). He noted that those recruited to the APS "are intelligent, educated and socially involved. They look forward to their work eagerly—seeing it as relevant and challenging." Discussion with older officials who had experienced 20 or so years of its impact had, however, left him with a "profoundly different impression":

> Years of involvement in routine and ritualistic processes, an inability to see the outcome of work done, a sense of isolation from those with whose affairs government administration is concerned and a prevailing flatness in the quality of life, official and unofficial, generally has destroyed much of the vitality and concern which no doubt were as evident twenty years ago among them as it now is among their successors. There is I believe something seriously wrong with a system which so stultifies worthwhile human beings. (p. 50)

Jordan (1974) likewise observed that his department made "bright men behave as though they were dull, energetic men as though they were lazy and reasonably courageous men as though they were terrified of change" (p. 418). When I asked a newly arrived workmate what he thought of the atmosphere in our division he simply replied "comatose." Many of my workmates appeared to regard their working hours as "dead time" to be

grudgingly endured rather than as an opportunity for achievement. Such "time servers" tended to congregate at Class 8 level since this was a standard career plateau. One informant labeled this the "terminal Class 8" syndrome. Another declared, "Some of these blokes have been in the same place for too long for their own good, the best part of their lives spent in mediocrity." One observed, "People . . . that had been there a long time and hadn't got anywhere, appeared to me to be a member of the walking dead. That seems to be what happens to people, they slowly die." Jordan (1974) likewise observed that his workmates exhibited "the alienation of the child imprisoned in the schoolroom or the labourer tied to the assembly line" (p. 420). Humor is a typical means for coping with such privations. One of my workmates would ask others, tongue in cheek, "Are you coping with the challenge?" or would simply announce deadpan at his desk, "I don't think I can stand this excitement for much longer." Others would console themselves with the thought that others were even less enviably situated. As a workmate once reminded me, "there are worse jobs than sitting on your arse all day reading reports." The only times when I found my work to be challenging were when I worked to tight deadlines, since these provided me with a clear and attainable goal for which I could strive. As Csikszentmihalyi (1991) notes, emergencies at work create a sense of flow by focusing attention.

Conversation was a favorite pastime among my workmates because it provided mental stimulation and relief from the tedium of work. Csikszentmihalyi (1991) argues that conversation and social relationships are major sources of flow. These were my only sources of nonmonetary rewards from work. Around half of respondents saw "the people you work with" as being either a very or somewhat important reason for remaining in the public service, and this was a more common response among lower ranking officers (RCAGA, 1976, Vol. 3). Tucker (1992, p. 11) reports that data processing operators enjoyed the "happy social atmosphere" of the pool and that they were fearful that the de-pooling entailed by workplace restructuring would lead to a loss of social support. She cites the case of "one tightly knit group of three who would go anywhere, but together" and that some even volunteered to "give back" their 4% pay rise so as to remain in the pool. Eighty percent of respondents in one department were satisfied with "the people I talk to and work with on my job" (Matheson, 1992).

Alienated workers typically exhibit an instrumental orientation to work or one in which they seek to obtain extrinsic rather than intrinsic rewards. Only in the latter instance does the experience of flow arise (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Surveys show that such extrinsic rewards as the salary, job security,

and the possibility of a career and promotion provide the most important reasons why people join the public service and remain in it (RCAGA, 1976, Vol. 3). One reason for this concern with extrinsic rewards lies in the fact that they are often the only rewards that work provides. When asked what motivated public servants, one informant replied, “The money,” adding, “a lot of people are very bored.” In economic theory, wages and salaries compensate employees for the “disutility” of work. As a workmate once wryly observed, “We are paid to be bored.” Thirty-one percent of staff in my department agreed that “my current job is just a job, like any other” (DITAC, 1992). Mills (1953) maintained that the economic motives for work were now its only firm rationale, given the lack of intrinsic meaning that it had acquired. Gruenberg (1980) and Marshall, Newby, Rose, and Vogler (1988) found that the absence of intrinsic rewards led workers to upgrade the value of extrinsic rewards. The RCAGA (1976, Vol. 3) likewise found that such extrinsic rewards as salary and opportunities for promotion were less important incentives for working among senior officers than they were among the junior ranks. By contrast, the interest of the work was seen as being a more important incentive by senior officers. This is because their work provides much higher levels of intrinsic rewards than does the work of junior officers (Pusey, 1991; Jans & Frazer-Jans, 1990).

The Sources of Alienation: Job Characteristics and Their Structural Determinants

In the preceding section we saw that a large proportion of APS staff exhibit such symptoms of work alienation as low job involvement, boredom, apathy, an instrumental orientation to work, and diminished skills and mental capacities. In this section I will seek to explain why this is the case by examining a number of job characteristics. The first of these is *skill variety*, or the degree to which a job requires a range of skills. Skill variety in the APS has often been limited by a Taylorist form of job design that has yielded narrow and repetitive tasks, especially at junior levels (Maconachie, 1992; Tucker, 1992; Williams, 1992). Jans and McMahon (1988) found that only 35% of ASO 1s and 2s in the ATO scored high on skill variety, compared to 98% of the SES. Recent workplace reforms have addressed this problem. Whyte (1992) found that Data Entry Operators (DEOs) who underwent “de-pooling” nominated increased variety and skills as being the two most important reasons why their jobs had improved. Opportunities for skill utilization have also been limited within the APS. For example, staff

in one APS department nominated “better use of skills” as the single factor that would most improve the quality of their work life (Matheson, 1992). Jans, Frazer-Jans, et al. (1989) found that many ATO staff had inadequate opportunities to use their skills. One reason for this lies in the low skill requirements of clerical work. Probert and Hack (1991, pp. 14, 12) found that this was true of routine data entry tasks. One of their informants declared, “I find the work itself quite monotonous and mind numbing at times.” Another observed, “I didn’t think it would always be ‘dumb terminal work.’” In my experience clerical work required limited skills. The RCAGA (1976, Vol.3, p. 50) found that only 32% of third division officers considered that the work used their skills and abilities fully most of the time. A later survey in the Department of Finance (DOF, 1990) found that 43% of staff reported that an opportunity to make good use of their skills in their work arose no more frequently than “sometimes.” Written comments made by ATO staff (cited in Jans, Frazer-Jans, et al., 1989, Appendix 4, pp. 65, 41) and reports from my informants indicate that many APS jobs do not provide good opportunities for the use of skills.

The second Hackman job characteristic is *task identity*, or the extent to which a job involves the completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work. Task identity can be undermined by task fragmentation and specialization. For example, the use of a production line model in the ATO prevented staff from seeing a meaningful end result of their work because they did not perform a whole job and could not identify how their tasks fit into the overall system (Williams, 1992). Maconachie (1992) likewise reports that employment officers experienced dissatisfaction because they were unable to follow up on the results of their activities and to follow the fortunes of specific clients. Prior to de-pooling, DEOs in one APS agency had no sense of what the data they were inputting represented because it was in codes and was merely a stream of unconnected figures (Whyte, 1992). Much work is divided vertically between hierarchical levels rather than horizontally. For example, policy tasks are typically delegated and then sent back “up the line” after completion for review. An item of work may therefore pass through multiple layers of the hierarchy and in so doing be successively revised and rewritten, thereby losing its sole authorship and task identity. Work products that move horizontally to the next sequence in the production line also lose their task identity and significance. As one informant noted, “cases would never come back . . . you’d never see a full thing.” ATO staff likewise reported that lack of case ownership of transactions diminished their job satisfaction (Williams, 1992).

The fact that workers forfeit control over work products also erodes task identity. For example, the work of policy analysts is departmental property and can be used by superiors without acknowledging their authorship. This deprives them of a sense of psychological ownership of their work and undermines their personal commitment to it. As Jordan (1974) observed, "A man's work is not his own, to make something of, but organisational property with no meaning in itself" (p. 417). Mills (1953) likewise noted the expropriation of the office worker that is entailed by both the legal framework of capitalism and the modern division of labor: "The product as the goal of his work is legally and psychologically detached from him, and this detachment cuts the nerve of meaning which work might otherwise gain from its technical processes" (p. 225). The collective nature of administrative work compounds this problem by making it difficult to attribute work outcomes to specific individuals.

The third job characteristic is *task significance*, or the ability to have an impact on the lives and work of other people. Multiple levels of review, specialization, and high levels of interdependence and collaboration undermine task significance by obscuring the connection between work efforts and their results. For example, many graduate recruits join believing that they will be able to shape public policy and to influence policy outcomes. It is an illusion of which most are quickly disabused. A survey in the Department of Finance found that only 40% of staff obtained a sense of achievement from their job more frequently than "sometimes" (DOF, 1990). Many workers undertake tasks that have been planned by others. One study of junior APS staff found that they "could not show any enthusiasm without knowing why a job had to be completed, or anything about its motive, aim or contribution to the end product" (RCAGA Task Force on Efficiency, 1975, p. 10). Probert and Hack (1991, p. 14) likewise found that clerical workers in one APS agency did not need to have any understanding of the significance of their tasks. Several workers expressed a need for greater understanding of "what it is they are doing and why." One complained that "the information given relating to our work is inadequate and very vague." One study (RCAGA, 1976, Vol. 4) found that the tasks of file storage and retrieval provided no sense of achievement.

The same is true of much administrative work. For example, I spent many weeks collecting statistics that were never used. Informants also noted that much of their work was fruitless or futile. Sixty percent of staff in one department likewise report that "unnecessary work" interferes with their work to at least some extent (Matheson, 1992). Policy work often lacks task significance because it must pass through multiple hierarchical levels and

potential veto points on its passage up the line. Campbell and Halligan (1992) report that a survey of the SOGs within the Treasury disclosed a lack of clarity about objectives and "most surprisingly, a sense of alienation." As one SES officer observed, "They weren't clear on objectives for the department or their division or their branch or their section. There was very little feedback . . . they didn't see where they fitted into the big picture . . . they weren't getting a lot of psychic income . . . that was the biggest shock" (p. 108). Baker (1989) likewise observes that APS middle managers are typically "disconnected" from senior management and agency goals. One informant noted that the end product of work was "not visible" because it was consumed by unseen and anonymous clients. Another likewise observed, "You never got to hear of any patients getting better, of people being happy that they'd been awarded their pension . . . never a result, always just through-put." When contact with clients does occur it is frequently unrewarding. Street level informants reported many instances of verbal abuse, threats of violence, and physical assault by clients, as did respondents to a staff survey in an APS department (Weatherley, 1993). Younger APS staff are attracted by the ideal of public service but see the time lag between actions and results, "burn out" and stress from dealing with abusive members of the public, barriers to risk taking and innovation, and multiple levels of review as factors that might discourage them from remaining in the APS (Management Advisory Committee [MAC], 2005).

The fourth job characteristic of *autonomy* arises when we can control the pace, content, location, and performance of work. Control over the pace of work can be restricted by deadlines. For example, 25% of staff reported that they always had time pressures, whereas another 42% usually had them (DITAC, 1992, Appendix A). As one informant noted, "In regional offices you've always got a time pressure of getting a certain amount of work done . . . . Everyone has deadlines. There's deadlines for expected numbers of days to process an age pension claim, a certain number of days expected to process a job allowance claim. . . . You're always conscious of the need to meet a deadline." Street level bureaucrats generally exercise little control over their work pace since this is set for them by clients. For example, Maconachie (1992) reports that the work schedule of employment officers was "predominantly determined by the flow of clients into the office, or the receipt of vacancies" (p. 225). Task fragmentation and an inability to control the pace of work typify the work of street level bureaucrats. Lipsky (1980) accordingly characterizes this job as an "alienated role." Control over the location of work is restricted by the requirement that staff be physically present at their desks during working hours. To ensure that this is the case

staff are subject to monitoring of their attendance and surveillance. For example, whenever I returned to my desk after an absence my first supervisor would glance at his watch. Not surprisingly, I often felt that I was imprisoned in the office.

Public servants generally exercise limited control over the content of their jobs because work is assigned to them by superiors. This lack of choice generates alienation by reducing our intrinsic motivation (Argyle, 1987). Csikszentmihalyi (1991) argues that the ability to pursue goals of one's own choosing creates flow by strengthening the self. By contrast, those who must act in ways that contradict their goals experience alienation. As Marx noted, alienation arises when workers have forfeited the ability to control their destiny (McLellan, 1971). I would nominate the inability to select work tasks in accordance with one's personal interests as being the single most important source of alienation among policy analysts. For example, many of my workmates expressed regret at their inability to work on topics in which they were interested. Jordan (1974) likewise observed:

> Personal motivation, instead of being recognized and directed to the achievement of organisational goals, is suppressed systematically, to be replaced by motivation generated and controlled by the organisation. Fragmentation, routinization, impersonality, . . . and lack of feedback prevent continuing personal commitment to pieces of work, and the development of special skills, and create boredom. (p. 420)

Surveys show that low job involvement among ATO staff is attributable to two key factors: low skill utilization and low participation in decision making (Jans & McMahon, 1988). Other research shows that autonomy and skill use are strongly associated with intrinsic job satisfaction (Argyle, 1987; Prandy, Stewart, & Blackburn, 1982). Rules can restrict the method of performing work, especially among street level bureaucrats. Maconachie (1992) reports that APS officers engaged in client casework were "subject to numerous rules and regulations regarding delegations, and time allocations for particular tasks" (p. 225). Centralized decision making within the APS also limits the autonomy of staff (Matheson, 1997). As a deputy head of the APS Commission has acknowledged:

> The tragedy, and I use the word advisedly, is that so often it [the APS] ignores the clamour, it suppresses and limits the potential of its people, locking them away in a culture which, far from empowering its people, all too often depowers them. (Baker, 1989, p. 137)

The fifth Hackman model job characteristic is *job feedback*. The Management Advisory Board/Management Improvement Advisory Committee (MAB/MIAC, 1992) found that only 40% of APS staff were satisfied with the information that they received from management. Jans and McMahon (1988, pp. 34, 43) found that most ATO staff were not obtaining much feedback from either the job or from supervisors. They quote one worker as stating, "Feedback from management is almost non-existent." A survey of SES officers (Jans & Frazer-Jans, 1990) explains why this is the case, since they were found to lack a strong "staff orientation," that is, they did not see staff as having "ideas and skills which are useful and which should be actively sought, used and rewarded" (p. 36). Baker (1989) likewise notes that many APS managers fail to develop their staff. As one informant noted, "Senior officers were indifferent to the feelings of subordinates." When a group of graduate recruits who were attending a training course complained to an SES officer about the boredom of their jobs he simply responded by saying: "You're not paid to enjoy yourselves." We can attribute such indifference to the fact that the employment relationship in individualistic cultures tends to be viewed as purely economic and devoid of wider social obligations (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). APS managers generally display a *transactional* rather than a *transformational* leadership style. Whereas the former is bureaucratic and involves an impersonal exchange of tangible rewards, the latter is charismatic and involves an exchange of intangible rewards in which individualized consideration is given to followers' needs. Sarros, Tanewski, Winter, Santora, and Densten (2002) found that transactional leadership styles typify bureaucratic organizations and that they create alienation. Isolation from clients is also a factor that can limit the extent of feedback for staff.

Interesting work allows us to experience flow by allowing for self-expression and creativity, deep concentration, and the pursuit of self-chosen goals. For example, Jans and McMahon (1989) found that self expression, or the extent to which a job provides opportunities for skill use, learning, interesting work, and producing creative solutions to problems, predicted levels of job involvement in the ATO. The limited degree to which most administrative work allows for such self-expression is reflected in the low levels of job involvement displayed by ATO staff. As an informant noted, "There was no way you could show any sort of flair or independence, you had to do this work of set tasks." I found that even policy work could be uninteresting, since most of it concerned administrative minutiae rather than strategic issues. An example would be investigating the tariff rate on rubber mallets or studying nontariff barriers to exports of fruitcakes. When a workmate complained to our supervisor that he found it difficult to

become interested in such eye glazing subjects, the latter confessed that he shared the same problem. He could only advise him, “You have to try to become interested.” Likewise, when I asked a former supervisor who had been relocated to a different division if he was interested in his new subject matter, he simply replied that public servants developed a “pro forma interest” in their assigned work topics.

The prosaic character of administration reflects the “matter of fact” attitude that Weber saw as typifying bureaucracy and which he contrasted with the extraordinary or noneveryday nature of charismatic leadership. Whereas charisma is oriented to “non-everyday” or “other worldly” values and seeks to challenge a given social order, the “instrumental rational action” that is characteristic of bureaucracy is oriented toward the everyday world of material interests and seeks pragmatic adaptation to an existing social system (Mommsen, 1989). Charismatic leaders, for example, typically eschew mundane details when pursuing an exalted vision (du Gay, 2000). By contrast, bureaucratic rationality disenchants the world since it deals with the mundane and predictable rather than with the inspiring or novel. As Weber observed, bureaucracy had an inherent tendency to extend its controls to all spheres of human conduct to eliminate any sources of irrational or unpredictable social conduct (Mommsen, 1989). In so doing, its instrumental rationality threatened to encroach on our “substantive rationality,” or comprehension of the meaning or purpose of action. The result, as Mannheim observed, is that bureaucracies tend to turn all political issues into matters of administration (cited in Jackall, 1988). For example, Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman (1981) report that the senior bureaucrats that they studied tended to neglect the human, political, and social dimensions of a policy issue and to frame it instead in “the most technical and boring terms possible” (p. 256).

Another source of psychic entropy lies in the turgid character of bureaucratic language. Csikszentmihalyi (1994) argues that complexity differs from confusion in that it unites the two opposing properties of differentiation and integration. By creating confusion, turgid prose reduces our mental complexity and saps our psychic energy. For example, many fellow recruits reported that they had ceased to engage in recreational reading since they had joined the public service because their work reading left them mentally exhausted. As a historian who worked as a Prime Ministerial speechwriter ruefully discovered:

> Bureaucratic language tends naturally towards the bloodless, but that is not the same as dead or useless. Dead was how it came. Almost every draft

> speech and document from the departments arrived verbless, grey and hackneyed. In Orwell's words, it anaesthetizes a portion of one's brain. Often it felt like much more than a portion. (Watson, 2002, pp. 47-48)

Turgidity arises partly from the standardization that thought and language undergo within bureaucracies. Examples include form letters and the cut-and-paste technique. It also arises from the use of jargon by bureaucrats to project authority. As Weber observed, a specialized language enables bureaucrats to mystify outsiders and thereby to bolster their power (Hummel, 1987). In England the use of French and Latin by the government, church, military, and law from the 11th to the 14th centuries enabled these elites to mark themselves off from the uneducated majority, who used English. The same habit persists among government officials today. Words of Latinate French origin constitute almost 25% of the English vocabulary, yet analysis shows that the Latinate French vocabulary accounts for as much as half of government writing. By using abstract nouns and a formal Latinate vocabulary such officials generate an excessively formal style of language that is unnecessarily hard for others to read ("Latinate Language," 2004).

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis enables us to identify the following set of structural factors as the underlying determinants of alienation among APS staff. They are: task fragmentation; the vertical and horizontal divisions of labor; nonownership of work products; the collective nature of administrative work; specialization; the low skill requirements of clerical work; organizational size; the separation of the planning and execution of work; the futility of work; isolation from clients; hostility from clients; transactional leadership; an inability to choose the content, location, and timing of work; centralized decision making; rules; subordination to authority; uninteresting work; and turgid language. Can we attribute these factors to bureaucracy? Broadly speaking, the answer is "yes." Six features of bureaucracy can be identified as key sources of alienation, namely, its work tasks, control imperative, structural attributes, impersonality, instrumental rationality, and language. I will examine each one in turn.

First, bureaucracies generate large amounts of clerical work since they rely on files and written documents to conduct administration. Weber argued that the increase in the number of clerical workers was a direct consequence of the growth of bureaucracy (Mommsen, 1989). Such clerical work generally requires limited skills. Second, bureaucracies are suffused

by a control imperative that is manifested in such features of bureaucracy as centralization, rules, hierarchical control and subordination, the nonappropriation of office, and the financial dependence of officials (Hummel, 1987; Mintzberg, 1979). This control imperative generates alienation by limiting our autonomy and our capacity to select goals. For example, Jans and McMahon (1988) found that job involvement within the ATO was primarily determined by two factors: opportunities to participate in decision making and levels of skill utilization. As Csikszentmihalyi (1991) observes, where people can choose their goals they will have a greater feeling of ownership of such decisions and will therefore be more strongly committed to them. By contrast, those on whom goals are imposed will experience a sense of alienation. This would explain the paradoxical finding that people are more likely to report that they would rather be doing something else when they are at work than during their leisure time, even though they more frequently experience flow at work than during leisure. The extent to which individuals are subject to authority is a factor that determines alienation, as Etzioni's (1961) compliance theory recognizes. For example, Bonjean and Grimes (1970) found that authority was more closely related to various types of alienation than any of the other organizational dimensions.

The third source of alienation lies in the structural properties of specialization, hierarchy, and size. These limit the amount of skill variety, task identity, task significance, and feedback. The extent of specialization diminishes as we ascend the hierarchy. Accordingly, jobs at senior levels allow for greater levels of skill variety, task significance, and task identity (Jans & McMahon, 1988). Organizational size correlates with specialization and hierarchy. Levels of job satisfaction and job involvement are accordingly higher in smaller offices of the ATO than in larger ones. Jans, Frazer-Jans, et al. (1989) attribute this to the nature of organizational culture within smaller offices, since aspects of job design do not differ much between different-sized offices. Research cited in Mintzberg (1979) shows that members of smaller organizations feel less remote from senior management and find their work to be more meaningful. Bureaucratic impersonality is a fourth source of alienation. It has two aspects: first, the separation of official and personal concerns, and second, the impersonal treatment of individuals. Accordingly, bureaucrats conduct business "without hatred or passion and hence without affection or enthusiasm" (Weber cited in Hummel, 1987). The first aspect of impersonality impairs our capacity to pursue personal goals when at work, whereas the second undermines task significance and feedback by depersonalizing our relationships with clients and superiors. Impersonality, standardization, and hierarchy underlie turgid

official language, which is a fourth source of alienation. A fifth source of alienation is the instrumental rationality that is embodied in rules, procedures, and technical expertise. These standardize work and in so doing limit our autonomy, creativity, and self-expression. The result is a characteristic "deadness," or absence of vitality and enthusiasm. Bureaucracy also limits task significance by depriving work of transcendent purpose and substituting instrumental for substantive rationality.

We may conclude that the data from the APS supports the claims of Mills, Argyris, Peters, Kanter, and Hummel that bureaucracy generates alienation and jeopardizes our autonomy and opportunities for personal fulfillment. As Argyris (1957) noted, such principles of formal organization as task specialization, chain of command, unity of direction, and span of control deprive individuals of control over their work, encourage them to be passive and subordinate, require only shallow abilities, and generate frustration and psychological failure. Mills (1953) likewise argued that task fragmentation, expropriation, and bureaucratization generated white-collar alienation. Sarros et el. (2002) cite an extensive body of research that shows that hierarchies of centralized authority with formalized rules and procedures generate alienation. Notwithstanding this fact, bureaucracy is not wholly inimical to job involvement. For example, half of ATO staff exhibit medium to high levels of job involvement. Seven of my informants reported that they had found their work to be largely rewarding. One reason for this is that work, by providing us with goals, structured activities, feedback, and challenges, creates many of the conditions of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). The result is that people more often report experiencing flow during their working hours than when they are at leisure. This is because their leisure activities are typically unstructured and involve passive entertainment that requires limited skills rather than goal directed, challenging tasks. As Preston (1987) has argued, bureaucracy provides individuals with the capacities and resources to exercise freedom of choice by providing them with opportunities to exercise their skills and to engage in rule governed activities. Csikszentmihalyi likewise argues that flow arises when we can use skills to perform structured, goal directed activities. Within bureaucracies, however, such opportunities for skill use are distributed unequally between those at the top and those at the bottom. In the ATO, for example, levels of skill utilization and organizational rank strongly correlate (Jans & McMahon, 1988).

This situation arises because the degree of bureaucratization inversely correlates with organizational rank (Mintzberg, 1979). Within the ATO for example, the senior ranks are more likely to perceive organizational culture

as being “organic” rather than “mechanistic.” Their policy advising, managerial, and professional jobs require more skill than do the secretarial and clerical jobs performed at junior levels and score more favorably on various job characteristics (Jans, Frazer-Jans, et al, 1989). They are also less standardized. Whereas 66% of junior officers considered their jobs to be “routine,” only 3% of senior officers shared this view (RCAGA, 1976, Vol. 3). They also allow for greater levels of autonomy, more personal relations, and greater substantive rationality. For example, the SES enjoy better social relations with their superiors, are more often consulted by them, exercise greater discretion, are more involved in goal setting, and participate more in decision making than do the lower ranks (DITAC, 1992; DOF, 1990; Task Force on Management Improvement [TFMI], 1992; MAB/MIAC, 1992; Jans, Frazer-Jans, et al., 1989).

How can we reconcile the data presented in this article with previous findings that bureaucracy does not generate alienation? The answer may lie in the way that previous researchers have defined the concepts of alienation and bureaucracy. Moeller and Charters (1966) defined alienation in terms of only one dimension, namely, powerlessness. They also defined bureaucracy largely in terms of the dimensions of standardization and formalization. In so doing they omitted the key dimensions of specialization and hierarchy. Their finding that a climate of oppressive authority created a sense of powerlessness is, however, consistent with the proposition that hierarchical control reduces autonomy. Aiken and Hage’s (1966) finding that alienation stems from centralization and formalization is also congruent with the findings of this study. Their definition of alienation as a feeling of disappointment with career and professional development and of dissatisfaction in social relations with supervisors and co-workers differs from mine, though. Bonjean and Grimes (1970) defined alienation using the dimensions of normlessness, social isolation, general alienation, or a sense of separateness from society, anomia, powerlessness, and self-estrangement. Their definition is more all-embracing than mine, which focuses on self-estrangement. Their finding that self-estrangement among paid workers was significantly related to authority, procedures, specialization, and impersonality is congruent with the findings of this study, though. Organ and Greene (1981) examined only one dimension of bureaucracy, namely formalization. The findings presented here, however, suggest that it is specialization, hierarchy, and size that are the main structural sources of alienation rather than formalization. Furthermore, Adler and Borys (1996) argue that the alienating effects of formalization vary depending on whether rules are designed to enable employees to better manage their tasks or

to coerce their work effort and compliance. Alienation arises only in the latter instance.

Kohn's (1971) finding that men who work in bureaucracies are more self-directed, open to change, and intellectually flexible is at odds with the proposition that bureaucracy reduces personal autonomy. He attributes this finding to the fact that such men tend to have higher standards of education, to perform more complex work, and to enjoy greater levels of job security and income than do men who work in nonbureaucratic organizations. Kohn used the number of levels in the hierarchy as the index of bureaucratization. The nonbureaucratic organizations that Kohn studied would largely comprise what Mintzberg (1979) calls "simple structure" organizations. Such organizations have few hierarchical levels, autocratic authority, and less complex work. Mintzberg cites research that shows that small organizations provide less fulfillment of needs for low- and middle-level managers than do large organizations. Simple structure organizations may therefore be even more alienating than machine bureaucracies. In contrast to simple structure and machine bureaucratic organizations, those who work in what Mintzberg calls "professional bureaucracies" and "adhocracies" enjoy higher levels of autonomy and are less alienated. This is because the work that is performed in such instances is more complex and less amenable to close supervision and standardization. Organ and Greene (1981) and Thomas and Johnson (1991) mostly studied professionals employed in such organizations, which probably explains why they encountered low levels of alienation among their samples.

Preceding investigations have largely attributed the presence of alienation to such structural attributes of bureaucracy as centralized hierarchies, specialization, and formalization rather than to its work tasks, impersonality, instrumental rationality, and language. They have furthermore tended to study single organizational types or tasks, or to use entire organizations as their unit of analysis, thereby making it difficult to detect the variations in alienation that arise from differences in organizational types, levels, and tasks. Many researchers have also used a single structural dimension, such as the number of hierarchical levels, as an index of bureaucratization. This does not permit us to distinguish simple structure organizations from small professional bureaucracies. Focusing on organizational structures may also lead us to overlook the fact that these generate alienation only by influencing job characteristics. It is the extent to which jobs are controlled, specialized, and formalized that determines the level of alienation, rather than the mere presence of organizational hierarchies, specialization, and rules (see Kohn,

1976). For example, although both machine and professional bureaucracies possess such structural attributes as hierarchies, specialization, and rules, the more complex nature of professional work makes it less amenable to hierarchical control, fragmentation, and standardization. Professional bureaucracies are therefore less alienating than machine bureaucracies, notwithstanding their outward structural similarities. As Adler and Borys (1996) note, studies that focus simply on the number of hierarchical levels may miss the enabling or coercive character of the relations between such levels. Using the number of organizational subunits as an index of specialization rather than the extent to which work tasks are fragmented, or the extent of rule codification as an index of formalization rather than the extent to which such rules actually govern behavior, may yield similar oversights.

It may be possible to reduce levels of alienation by reducing bureaucratic controls and mitigating the effects of specialization, hierarchy, and size. Hales (1993) argues that bureaucracy endures in the face of problems and inefficiencies because managers are preoccupied with direction and control rather than because of the requirements of organizational tasks. The requirements of organizational control and those of organizational efficiency can therefore conflict. He notes that managers are more likely to tolerate bureaucratic inefficiencies to retain the reassuring certainties of personal control if they do not feel able to trust their subordinates. Mintzberg (1979) likewise notes the presence of a pervasive control mentality within bureaucracy that is manifested in the feeling that managers cannot trust subordinates unless they are demonstrably and physically "on the job." In my experience, APS managers perfectly exemplified this mentality. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the mechanistic structures that predominate within APS departments derive in many instances from the desire to exercise political control rather than from the functional requirements of work tasks (Matheson, 1996). Given that many bureaucratic controls are the product of a desire for control, it should be possible to abolish them without sacrificing organizational efficiency. Indeed, abolishing such controls may actually increase efficiency by allowing employees to exercise greater levels of initiative. For example, when asked to nominate the two factors that would best improve the quality of service provided by their immediate work area, 30% of staff chose "more responsibility for decision making was devolved to action officers," the most popular choice along with "senior officers took more interest" (MAB/MIAC, 1992, p. 76).

The Brazilian manufacturing company Semco provides an example of what it may be possible for such reforms to accomplish. It achieved an 8-fold

increase in employee productivity and a 40-fold increase in its annual sales revenue following the adoption of a policy of worker empowerment in the 1980s. To accomplish these changes, however, the CEO notes that he had to surrender control over the company to its employees and in so doing to learn to trust them. He argues that this can more easily occur where there is a close "alignment" between the goals of employees and those of the organization (Semler, 2003). Semco seeks to create such an alignment by sharing profits and by allowing workers to choose jobs that match their interests. As we noted earlier, alienation arises when there is a conflict between personal and organizational goals. Adler and Borys (1996) also argue that goal congruence between employees and organizations is a critical contingency in determining whether the enabling as opposed to the alienating coercive type of formalization can be used. Even where coercive measures are used they may not be effective in generating work effort since such controls tend to alienate staff from organizational goals. For example, Brehm and Gates (1997) found that the use of coercion was largely ineffective in generating greater work effort among bureaucrats. Instead, work effort was greatest where staff were able to perform tasks that were consistent with their preferences.

A key problem of machine bureaucracies, though, is that they produce a conflict between the goals of the organization and those of the individual (Mintzberg, 1979). This occurs partly because the work performed in the operating core is routine. Mintzberg accordingly argues that this conflict can only be reduced through the automation of the technical system. It should also be possible to reduce this conflict by redesigning work and empowering employees, given that job design very often reflects managers' need for control rather than the requirements of organizational efficiency. Such changes may prove more difficult to effect within the public sector because of the need to maintain political control and to ensure public accountability. It must be conceded that full worker control would not be possible in the public sector for precisely these reasons. Increased delegation, job enrichment, use of organic structures, and less impersonal forms of supervision would be perfectly feasible, though. Sarros et al. (2002) found, for example, that the presence of transformational leadership and greater levels of participation in decision making could mitigate work alienation. Such reforms may not only improve job satisfaction but also improve organizational efficiency by increasing productivity. Adler and Borys (1996) cite evidence suggesting that the use of enabling formalization has such an effect. The evidence presented here also suggests that low productivity arises from a lack of intrinsic work motivation and that this in turn stems

from job and organizational design. Jans and Frazer-Jans (1991) found, for example, that those APS workplaces with a strong "staff orientation" also scored high on organizational effectiveness.

We may conclude that by securing procedural conformity, a sense of vocational commitment, and subordination to authority, bureaucracy can serve to ensure civil service efficiency, equity, ethics, accountability, and nonpartisanship, and thereby safeguard liberal democracy. Therefore, du Gay is correct to argue that blanket condemnations of bureaucracy are unwarranted. On the other hand, such elements of bureaucracy do restrict people's autonomy and harm their mental well-being. As Weber noted, bureaucracy is a two-edged sword, because by limiting the discretion of officials it allows for greater administrative efficiency, but also thereby deprives such officials of their autonomy (Mommsen, 1989). Bureaucracy may generate inefficiency, however, if such restrictions on autonomy de-motivate officials and thereby curtail their productivity. *Contra* du Gay, bureaucracy can permit inefficiency, waste, and inertia by failing to provide for self-realization and personal involvement. Without jeopardizing such traditional goals as efficiency, equity, probity, nonpartisanship, and accountability, it should be possible to de-bureaucratize government. Semco, for example, has successfully combined transparent, ethical, and accountable management with employee empowerment. To do this, however, would require a shift from the use of supervision and rules toward objectives and shared values as the basis of managerial control and a shift from transactional toward transformational leadership styles. Indeed, the APS is moving in this direction, as it has recently embraced a philosophy of "values based management," or an attempt to secure staff compliance through cultivating shared values rather than through the use of rules and commands. Furthermore, since the mid-1980s the APS has sought to de-bureaucratize by increasing managerial autonomy, flattening organizational structures, and adopting the principles of corporate management. It has also undergone a process of workplace restructuring to create multiskilled jobs and has reduced the volume of unskilled work through increased use of information technology. Although it is undeniable that governments need to ensure procedural conformity, subordination to authority, and the separation of official and personal business, it is possible to meet such goals and to provide individuals with autonomy. Indeed, the very fact that the senior ranks of the APS currently enjoy high levels of autonomy while retaining an ethos of office shows that is possible to provide greater autonomy without jeopardizing civil service virtues.

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