

Organizational Identity and Potential Role Conflict for Professional Musicians in Military and Service Bands

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Abstract

In Australia many military and para-military organizations employ professional musicians in fulltime band units. This case study looks at how the members of one such band, the Band of the South Australia Police deal with the dual roles of their employment and the conflicting identities they confront. Members must learn to reconcile their self-image of being a professional musician with that of the organizationally based identity of being a police officer.

While their duties are not the same as operational police, they are aware that what they do must contribute to the overall objectives of the police organization. As such while they may not identify with the traditional role of a *police officer*, they do identify with the fact that they are members of the *Police Band*.

In this way they are able to reconcile the different images and identities with which they are confronted, using their musical skills to actively further organizational objectives, justifying the work they do as musicians that are employed by the police force.

Those that find they are not able to reconcile the different aspects of performing as a *police* musician as opposed to a musician *per se* often choose to leave the organisation in pursuit of other musical career options.

This case study is based on the author's own experience within the SAPOL Band from 1985 to 1998 incorporating additional information gathered from a series of conversations held in early 2003 with current band members and band management.

Introduction

In Australia there are as many professional musicians employed in military style bands as there are in the fulltime symphony orchestras. Various military and para-military organizations in Australia employ professional musicians in fulltime band units. These include the Royal Australian Navy, The Australian Army, The Royal Australian Air Force as well as the state police forces of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia. The instrumentation of the majority form what is known as concertbands, comprising woodwind, brass and percussion players. The average band is between 30 and 40 musicians. Other organizations also utilize Pipe Bands (generally smaller in number), consisting of bagpipe players and drummers.

This case study looks at how the members of one such band, the Band of the South Australia Police (SAPOL Band) deal with the dual roles of their employment and the conflicting identities these roles place on them. On the one hand they perceive themselves to be professional musicians and at the same time must learn to identify with the role of a police officer.

How artists in these situations deal with this potential conflict is important from the perspective of dealing with multiple notions of identity and the tensions this may bring. Glynn's (2000) case study of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra highlights how two different identities held by the management/board and the players themselves

contributed to the serious industrial issues and later action taken (also see Golden-Biddle and Hayagreeva 1997).

To be able to successfully manage multiple identities is of interest to all arts managers who deal with various external stakeholders whose perceived image of the organisation may differ from the identity held by the artists within.

This case study is based on the author's own experience within the SAPOL Band over nearly 13 years from 1985 to 1998. Additional information was gathered from a series of conversations in early 2003 with current band members and band management to ascertain contemporary views of the issues under investigation, from both the Band and SAPOL perspectives.

Organizational Identity and Commitment

Albert and Whetten (1985) in their seminal paper "Organizational Identity" defined organizational identity as being what is central, distinctive and enduring to the organization. Closely related to this concept of organizational identity are the notions of organizational image and organizational culture. While looking at various aspects of organizational life, these concepts are related and often impact upon each other to varying degrees (Hatch and Schultz 1997; Scott and Lane 2000).

Organizational identity describes what its members think about the organization whereas image is about what outsiders think, or more correctly, what organizational members perceive others to think (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail 1994; Marziliano 1998; Porter 2001).

Albert, Ashforth and Dutton note that understanding the dynamics of identity are essential due to the impact such notions have on “how and what one values, thinks, feels and does in all social domains, including organizations” (2000, 14). They go on to emphasize the importance the work place can have on one’s notion of identity stating that: “By internalizing the group or organizational identity as a (partial) definition of self, the individual gains a sense of meaningfulness and connection” (2000, 14).

The relationship between identity, image and culture is complex and are all part of the process of making sense of an organization and its various constituencies (Hatch and Schultz 1997; Gioia, Schultz and Corley 2000). Hatch and Schultz, referring to previous work undertaken, summarized this interaction:

“As Hatch (1993) explains, identity involves how we define and experience ourselves and this is influenced by our activities and beliefs which are grounded in and justified by cultural assumptions and values” (1997, 360).

Organizational identity, image and culture are important aspects of organizational life. Managers of arts organizations have particular issues when relating to both organizational identity and image from both internal and external perspectives. While on one hand they have the expectations of the artists from within the organization, on the other they have pressures from a myriad of external stakeholders who may have different perspectives on what the organization is about.

The literature on organizational commitment suggests there is a distinct link between the concepts of organizational identity and that of organizational commitment, although the exact nature of this relationship is not always clear. Some studies suggest that a strong belief and commitment to the goals and values of the organization, (as in the concept of organizational identity) is an integral part of organizational commitment (see for example Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian

1974), while others suggest that organizational identification is a function of developing organizational commitment (see Siegel & Sisaye 1997).

Much research has been undertaken in regards to the notion of organizational commitment (OC) and the relevance to organizational managers. Baruch (1998) when undertaking a critical assessment of the current relevance of organizational commitment noted:

“At the time [early to mid 20th century] it was a revelation that employees’ have feelings towards the organisation, including identification with the aims and goals of their work-place. The nature and notion of the OC concept is that a person has a sense of commitment to the organization he/she works for. This may involve identification with, tendency to stay in, and willingness to exert efforts for the organization” (1998, 135).

Organizational commitment can take a number of forms and can impact on the organization in many ways. Research has shown that committed employees will contribute more positively to the organization than others, through outcomes such as a desire to remain with the organization, lower absenteeism and increased job performance (Mowday, Porter & Steers 1982; Beck and Wilson 2000; Metcalfe & Dick 2001).

Meyer and Allen (1990) propose that there are three components to organizational commitment: affective, continuance and normative. Affective commitment relates to affective attachment to the organization and is defined as relating to “the way individuals view their employment relationship, and how far their “mind sets” are congruent with the goals and values of the organization” (Metcalfe & Dick 2001, 403).

The notion of affective commitment is directly related to that of organizational identity, but it should be noted that members of professional organizations can have multiple

commitments such as to the profession itself or a related association (Siegel & Sisaye 1997; Metcalfe & Dick 2001).

Balmer and Wilson when studying issues of corporate identity also noted in the cases studied that “personnel identified with noncorporate identities such as their job function, as well as their professional and departmental/divisional culture” (1998, 27).

Alvesson and Willmott when looking at organizational identity in knowledge-intensive industries noted that in the context of the professional services sector, questions such as “who am I?” and “what are we?” may be answered more in terms of professional or occupational affiliation rather than organizationally based (2002, 625).

When looking at aspects of identity and image in relation to military and para-military musicians this can raise an interesting and important dilemma. Musicians from within bands operated by the military and other like organizations such as Navy, Air Force, Police and other “service” type organizations have the dual role of reconciling their identity as musicians within a larger organizational framework, steeped in both organizational and corporate identity, symbols, beliefs and rituals.

The role of musicians in military style organizations:

Military bands are steeped in tradition and have been in existence in some form since about 1678, (Sargent 1999) and have been a major aspect in providing valuable assistance in supporting a culture of Esprit de Corp. Drum and Fife Bands led soldiers into battle, signaling strategic and tactical maneuvers and changes on the field. The members joined the regiments specifically to take on these roles. Those regiments that employed Bands of Music drew its membership from the ranks of the regiment. Each officer on joining a regiment was required to contribute financially to

the band out of their mess funds (Sargent 1999; Colborne-Veel 1999). The regimental bands played an important part not only in military life but also in the life of the communities in which they were stationed. For example, the first recorded band performance in Australia was at the Governor's New Year's Day dinner of 1789 (Sargent 1999). According to Sargent:

"The bands of the garrison regiments, during their tours of duty in New South Wales and Van Diemens Land, were not called upon to perform in their primary roles – to lighten the march of the foot soldier and to support his morale in battle – but these bands fulfilled a wider role during their tours of duty in the colony, providing entertainment not only to the Vice Regal and military society but also for the wider colonial society, giving some relaxation from the rawness of life in the penal settlement" (1999, 34).

Modern military bands are fully professional musical ensembles often employing tertiary trained musicians directly into band corps and play an important and sophisticated role in public relations amongst their other, more traditional duties. Bands regularly break into various ensembles including rock bands, jazz groups, big bands, chamber ensembles and undertake elaborate concert performances and tours from local schools to major concert halls.

More than looking to provide amusement to the officers of the regiment or much needed musical contributions to remote colonies; the modern military band member joins a fulltime professional ensemble, intent on pursuing a professional musical career. Each musician who chooses to undertake his or her artistic trade within the confines of a militaristic culture and environment must deal with the impact such cultures may have (see Bannister 1994).

The Band of the South Australia Police

The Band of the South Australia Police (SAPOL Band) employs thirty-six musicians and is a unit of the South Australia Police (SAPOL). The State Government of South

Australia funds the band through the SAPOL budget. The main band is the concertband and musicians include woodwind, brass and percussion players, with a number performing also as vocalists and “rhythm section” musicians, such as keyboards, guitar and bass guitar, as required. The band also performs as a parade (or marching) band and in smaller groups including a big band, rock band, chamber groups and small jazz ensembles.

The SAPOL Band was formed in 1884, when 14 members of the Adelaide Metropolitan Foot Police created a volunteer brass band. The members were given a bonus of sixpence per day and allowed to up to four hours per week during their normal duties to attend practice. Early performances by the band included entertaining the young colony at outdoor events and Vice Regal functions, as well as leading the monthly “Pay Parades” where members of the Police Force marched through the streets of Adelaide to collect their pay. In 1957 the band became a fulltime unit of SAPOL and in 1974 it changed instrumentation to its current format (SAPOL, www.bandsapolice.com).

Up until 1957 the band was a volunteer organisation, drawing its members from within the ranks of the general police population. When the band was made a fulltime unit, the members were taken out of their current police duties and redeployed to the band unit. In its initial years as a professional unit, the band members undertook three days band duties and two days police support duties. Many of these duties have since been outsourced and now band members perform 100 per cent band duties. Over time recruitment into the band shifted focus from within SAPOL to outside, as members were specially recruited from civilian life to the organisation for their musical expertise.

Like many modern military bands, musicians are now selected for entry to the SAPOL Band by formal musical audition and short listed candidates are then processed through normal police recruiting channels. Successful recruits are then inducted directly into the band on their first day as police officers. Band recruits are already fully trained, professional musicians before they enter the band and as such have a strong identity as professional musicians. There is then a long period of time in which they must become accustomed to being seen by others as police officers.

It is important to note at this point that various induction/training requirements have been instigated by SAPOL over the years, resulting in the current band members having a mix of police training. Some more senior band members were employed at a time when all members were required to attend full cadet training (six months) at the Police Academy. Others have undertaken various length basic training programs (average of 4 weeks) before entering the band service. Since the early 1990's band musicians have not been required to attend the Police Academy for initial training and are inducted on their first day of employment into the band itself. From time to time however, band members have undertaken police related training as required.

These musicians while on duty perform their tasks as professional musicians but have the outward visibility of being police officers. By wearing the uniform of a police officer, they are perceived by outsiders to be members of the police force. As such certain expectations and codes of conduct are placed on them for which they may not feel comfortable. In short, they must act as police officers while in uniform, whether or not they identify with that role. Often this role clashes with the perceived role these individuals have as musicians, and dealing with this is an important aspect of the band management. Those that fail to reconcile these competing roles often leave the band and as a result, there is a substantial turnover of musicians within

their first two years of employment. Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail (1994) support this observation, stating:

“A person’s well-being and behavior are affected both by the attributes they ascribe to themselves and by those they believe others infer about them from their organizational membership..... If members interpret the external organizational image as unfavorable, they may experience negative personal outcomes, such as depression and stress..... Over time, members may either disengage themselves from prior organizational roles (Kahn, 1990) or exit the organization (Hirschman, 1970)” (1994, 240).

Police organizations are quite unique in their culture and organizational structure.

According to Vickers and Kouzmin (2001, 9) the police service exists to serve the community by upholding the law and maintaining the peace, while the “specialist and demanding life of a police officer requires a multitude of skills and abilities”. Police officers have the self-image of being a “crime fighter” (Murray, 1987, 15; cited in Vickers and Kouzmin, 2001, 11). The culture of the organization is one of a para-military style emphasizing a “command and control management style”, “centralized decision making” and is cited as being “control oriented, coercive and patriarchal” (Vickers and Kouzmin, 2001, 11-12). “The quasi-military emphasis requires (amongst other things) the duty to obey commands and the paying of compliments to commissioned officers” (Etter, 1993, 45; cited in Vickers and Kouzmin, 2001, 12). Finally police culture embodies a strong sense of loyalty and support for other officers (Vickers and Kouzmin, 2001,12).

Musicians Acting as Police Officers

When asked in a general context what one does for a living, band members generally state that they are either a “professional musician” or that they are a “member of the Police Band”. It is interesting to note that it is very rare for a band member to answer the above question by stating they are a “police officer”. While they wear the uniform, are paid under the Police Award and are subject to the rules and policies of the

Police Regulations, they still see themselves primarily as musicians, albeit ones that happen to be employed by the police force.

According to the SAPOL official website:

“The role of the Band is to reduce crime through the support of operational crime prevention and community safety initiatives. The Band’s function also serves to enhance police public relations and participate in State and ceremonial occasions” (SAPOL, www.sapol.sa.gov.au).

The band performs a number of engagements directly for SAPOL as well as for the State generally. However the main functions of the SAPOL Band can be categorized under three headings, those of:

1. Furthering crime prevention strategies;
2. Public Relations for SAPOL;
3. Providing ceremonial support and contributing to esprit de corps for SAPOL in particular and the state of South Australia in general.

Members themselves see the role of the band as being one that can support what SAPOL is working to achieve operationally, by acting in a support and enhancement type role. By presenting a skillfully blended package of music and crime prevention/public safety messages, the band is able to contribute towards the overall strategic goals and objectives of SAPOL.

It is at this point that one can begin to see a link between the perceived identity of the band members themselves and the role that they perform both within the organization as well as the wider community. While they do not see themselves as “crime fighters” in the normal sense of what we would think a police officer to be, they do perceive that the band has a role to perform which is unique within the police context. In other words: the members have a strong identification with the fact that the band is not any band – but the *Police Band*.

Firstly the band works actively to create opportunities to utilize their activities to further SAPOL objectives. Concerts in schools are used to promote road safety or anti- drug messages, while senior citizens concerts promote home and personal safety. Many communities both urban and regional are visited with the local police officers to help foster greater collaboration between all sectors of the community.

SAPOL Band members have been quite proactive in incorporating police related issues into their performances. For example, programs for schools including the School Beat Bands for primary schools and Rock Patrol performances for high schools have been very successful. Band members provide information on personal safety and other current issues and work to involve local police officers in developing these presentations.

Secondly the band can be viewed from a public relations perspective. Here the band is seen as a vehicle not only for promoting SAPOL to the wider community, but also to break down barriers with members of the public and facilitate greater communication. Even though the focus on performances here is on the music and entertainment value offered, all members wear police uniform during the concerts and this helps to promote a positive image of SAPOL to the wider community.

Thirdly the band performs at formal SAPOL functions providing support in the more traditional military style aspects of the organization. Graduation parades, church services, funerals and medal parades are all formal aspects that highlight the military roots of the organization. Here the band provides ceremonial support and assists in promoting esprit de corps with the force.

Outside of the SAPOL environment, there is the wider State perspective, which sees the SAPOL Band as the *State Band of South Australia*. Here the band performs for a

variety of external stakeholders including Vice Regal occasions; formal State occasions such as the Opening of Parliament or for visiting dignitaries; major sporting, tourism or arts events; and regional, national and international tours.

Each of these performances places a different perspective on the role of the musicians within the SAPOL Band and as such adds to the complex mix of identities each carries. Whether they are providing a vehicle to further SAPOL objectives, acting as State Ambassadors, contributing to the pomp and splendor of official ceremonies, or performing as entertainers to a local community in remote South Australia, the members of the SAPOL Band must be ready to adapt to the unique requirements of the particular task.

It is interesting to note however, that no matter the reason, the value of any performance is still gauged by the band members themselves in ways that relate to artistic value – not to its ability to achieve a Police or State objective. Performances are measured on personal factors relating to musical satisfaction and entertainment values such as: the performance level of the musicians and ensemble; the repertoire performed; the type of ensemble they are performing in; and the appreciation of, and connection with, the particular audience.

Police Officers Acting as Musicians

In addition many of the band personnel work as professional musicians alongside civilian musicians in commercial bands and other freelance work environments. How fellow musicians (insiders on one level), who are not members of the SAPOL Band (and therefore at the same time outsiders), perceive these individuals can be a difficult situation at times for many. In this situation the individuals concerned perceive themselves as musicians, but others see them to now be police officers as

well. It has been noted that public knowledge of one's association with a particular organization can create expectations in others of how that person may behave and the types of attitudes they are likely to hold (Tetlock and Manstead 1985; cited in Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail 1994).

Difficulty has arisen at times for band members who have reported a number of situations in which they are not as accepted in the musical community as they were before joining the police. It seems that it is difficult to gain the professional respect of fellow professional musicians who work on the freelance and professional circuit.

Common examples cited by SAPOL Band members include:

- Being accused of "selling out" by their freelance colleagues, by taking a fulltime job in the police or government
- Hearing deliberately provocative or disparaging comments and remarks (often in jest) as they arrive at performances
- Being treated differently as they are no longer "one of us" (i.e., the freelance/professional music community)

While most band members get used to such comments and learn to ignore them, many have commented that they find themselves having less involvement in such activities over time. The longer they stay in the SAPOL Band they see the frequency of calls for freelance work slowly drop and as such, the amount of work done outside the SAPOL Band also reduces.

Other members of the band find that their work in the professional music industry is of significant importance to them and find that being part of the SAPOL Band impinges on their other performance activities. As such they choose to leave the band to focus on pursuing other musical opportunities. Many past members have left the band to take up performance positions with the state symphony orchestras as well as accepting major freelance opportunities with large-scale musicals and touring shows, or just to concentrate on their freelance career generally.

Conclusion

The Band of the South Australia Police has had a long history. Its roots come from the volunteer organisation made up of serving police officers in the 1880s and it has developed to its current fulltime status employing professional musicians directly into the band. In this contemporary setting, musicians join the SAPOL Band primarily to further their musical career and as such they come into the organisation with a strong self-image of being a professional musician. On entering the organisation they must learn to understand that part of their role is also to perform as police officers. While their duties are not the same as operational police, they are aware that what they do must contribute to the overall objectives of SAPOL. As such while they may not identify with the traditional role of a *police officer*, they do identify with the fact that they are members of the *Police Band*.

Part of this process has led the members to actively pursue the development of programs that assist SAPOL in achieving its objectives through the utilization of their unique talents. By using musical performances to assist in the breaking down of barriers between the public and the police, they are able to help promote not only the organisation in general but also specific initiatives that are required from time to time. In this way they are able to reconcile the different images and identities with which they are confronted. In this way they can justify the work they do as musicians that are employed by the police force.

Those that find working within such an environment impacts too heavily on their self-image of pursuing a professional musical career find they are not able to reconcile the different aspects of performing as a *police* musician as opposed to a musician

per se. As such they choose to leave the organisation in pursuit of other musical career options.

Ultimately whatever the rationale provided for the performance of their craft, self-evaluation of their work still comes down to artistic and musical criteria. This evaluation of their own performances is often a difficult concept for the traditional police manager to grasp, but one that is always present in what might be considered more conventional artistic organisations.

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