

A Critical Analysis of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ Culture

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A thesis submitted to Macquarie University Business School in fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Management.

Originality Statement

I declare that this submission is my own work and, to the best of my knowledge, that it contains no materials that were previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material that have been accepted for the award of any other degree at Macquarie University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contributions made to the research by others with whom I have worked at Macquarie University or elsewhere are explicitly acknowledged in the thesis. I confirm that any future publications resulting from this thesis are my own work, including two publications which are currently under review for submission: Is Normative Control a Game of Self Consciousness Between Agents vis-a-vis Subjects? and; New Public Management: Establishing a Customer Centric Ideology in a NSW Public Sector Agency. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work. This thesis has also received the approval of the Ethics Review Committee (Human Research) at Macquarie University (Reference Number: 52020546613975).

Theaanna Kiaos

Signed Date: 1st October, 2021

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List of Abbreviations

ABW	Activity Based Working
APP	Application
APS	Australian Public Service
AUSLAN	Australian Sign Language
BAU	Business as Usual
BDM	Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages
BRAVO	Being Recognised as a Valuable member of our Organisation
CBD	Central Business District
CC	Call Centre
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CoS	Circle of Service
CoL	Cost of Living
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease
CPIs	Customer Performance Indicators (metrics)
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CSR	Customer Service Representative
CTP	Compulsory Third Party
DCS	Department of Customer Service
DDL	Digital Drivers Licence
DEI	Diversity, Equality and Inclusion
DFSI	Department of Financial Services and Innovation
DPC	Department of Premier and Cabinet

DSR	Digital Service Representative ‘Digi’
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
ELT	Executive Leadership Team
EOI	Expression of Interest
GSE	Government Sector Employment
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
KIF	Knowledge Intensive Firms
MNSW	Multicultural New South Wales
MoG	Machinery of Government
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPSP	Multicultural Policies and Service Programs
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
NDIS	National Disability and Insurance Scheme
NFP	Not For Profit
NPM	New Public Management
NSW	The State of New South Wales
OD	Organisational Development
P&C	People and Culture
PCG	Program Control Group
PICF	Participant Information and Consent Form
PNPM	Post New Public Management
PUMA	Public Management Committee and Secretariat
QLD	The State of Queensland
RMP	Restructure Management Plan

RMS	Roads and Maritime Services
RTA	Roads and Traffic Authority
SA	The State of South Australia
SC	Service Centre
SMC	Sydney Motorway Corporation
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
SSS	Support Service Specialist
TAS	The State of Tasmania
US	United States
VIC	The State of Victoria
VCC	Virtual Contact Centre
WiL	Women in Leadership

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Abstract

This thesis critically analysed a large New South Wales public sector organisation, Service NSW, its espoused culture as well as various subcultures that emerged during and after a time of immense structural change that occurred concurrently with the COVID-19 pandemic. The structural changes responded to the decision by NSW Treasury in 2018-19 to produce a budget saving of \$5.373 million (35% reduction), which resulted in the reorganisation of several NSW government agencies and their incorporation into the Department of Customer Service, as well as the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services cluster model, including Service NSW.

To investigate the impact of these changes, this thesis developed an interpretative conceptual framework and adopted an ethnographic case study and qualitative methods approach for the collection and analysis of empirical data on the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture, its various subcultures, forms of normative control and how staff members across the occupational community performed their work during times of change. In this way, the thesis addressed a gap in the literature on the impact of neoliberal ideology on Post New Public Management practice and public sector organisational culture from the perspective of the employee experience.

In order to understand the organisation’s employees *from their point of view*, this critical analysis drew on fieldnotes taken during the course of 2020 and 74 semi-structured interviews with participants from the Department of Customer Service and Service NSW. To provide additional research context, this critical analysis incorporates auxiliary data as captured through annual reports, various organisational publications and website resources. The findings of this ethnographic and qualitative methods study advances knowledge on Post New Public Management practice during a period of immense change in policy, public sector

resourcing, machinery of government changes as well as the impact to employees arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study found that the combined effect of these changes placed enormous, uncommon demands upon staff members across the organisation's occupational units, which were experienced in different ways and to varying degrees of severity. Accordingly, the thesis highlights the nuances of these changes, not only in relation to the impact upon Service NSW's operational activities, but also, the subjective experience of employees across the organisation's various membership groups. This thesis, therefore, argues that Post New Public Management theory and practice must consider the implications for public service employees in relation to work pressures which impact their subjective experience when operating in alignment with a customer centric model of culture in an effort to achieve goals that are underpinned by public policy.

Chapter One

Introduction to a Critical Analysis of the Service NSW

‘DNA’ Culture

This critical analysis of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture responds to one significant literary oversight by highlighting the demands placed upon the organisation’s employees due to neoliberal ideology and Post New Public Management practice in times of significant machinery of government changes, the COVID-19 pandemic along with the 2020 bushfires and floods. In this regard, this study critically analysed the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture, a prescribed culture that ‘places the customer at the heart of everything we do,’ the organisation’s various subcultures that emerged due to the establishment of the Department of Customer Service (DCS) and the machinery of government changes that led to the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model in 2018-19 across its cluster agencies, including Service NSW. By adopting an ethnographic and qualitative methods approach, the researcher’s time in the field was spent observing staff members of the organisation performing their work to interpret the impact upon their subjective experience during times of significant cost reduction as assigned by the NSW treasury. A budget saving of \$5.373 million (35% reduction) resulted in a Shared Corporate Services model which combined the People and Culture, Human Resource Business Partners and Talent and Diversity functions from various NSW government agencies into a cluster model, including Service NSW. This doctoral research sheds new light on the impact of these cost reduction initiatives on the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture, the emergence of various subcultures and the effect these structural changes had on the subjective experience of the organisation’s employees. In alignment with ethnographic methods, this doctoral research utilised participant observation and in depth semi-structured interviews by

taking an emic perspective, that is, from the viewpoint of Service NSW employees in relation to the 'DNA' culture during the machinery of government changes. The field work captured Service NSW work norms, formal and informal rules and everyday work rituals. The aims of this doctoral research address the following research questions:

1. What are the prominent characteristics of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture that affect every day work in the organisation, such as the organisation's values, norms, rules and rituals?
2. How have the machinery of government changes that were introduced in 2018-19 by the Department of Customer Service affected the characteristics of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture?
3. How were the changes experienced by Service NSW staff members when interacting at work?

This doctoral research is timely and allows for a greater polymorphic attitude to knowledge by utilising participant observation toward the interpretation of organisational members, *from their point of view*, in the NSW Public Service during times of immense structural and global change with COVID-19. While globally there are a number of ethnographically informed case studies (Ahrens, 1996; Kunda, 2009), local critical ethnographies that document the experience of employees in the NSW Public Service during times of immense structural change with machinery of government changes and global change with COVID-19, remains a marginalised pursuit. In this regard, non-critical studies are usually nomothetic and quantitatively based where researchers pose themselves as discoverers of universal regularities. This doctoral research, therefore, aims to provide the necessary critical lens to address the literary oversites concerning the lack of ethnographically informed case study research on cultural irregularities,

ambiguities and paradoxes within the NSW Public Service. By examining the Service NSW 'DNA' culture and its various subcultures, this thesis addresses this significant literature gap.

The literatures outlined in Chapter Two each provide the foundation for the logic that underpins each of the key components of the conceptual framework. Chapter Two presents a review of the scholarship on organisational culture, cultural control, identity and sociological literatures pertinent to conceptions of 'self.' The study of organisational culture has been characterised by prolonged critical debates informed by contested assumptions since the field was popularised since the 1990s. Accordingly, this review of organisational culture includes both normative and critical perspectives. The key debates concerning organisational culture further demonstrate the evolution of academic thought with respect to the word culture, reflecting upon the diverse range of meanings the term conveys. This includes the epistemologically acknowledged meaning of culture: culture as a metaphor as opposed to culture as a variable (Smircich, 1983). From the critical perspective of organisational culture, literatures belonging to functionalist science were out of scope and therefore excluded in the review since quantitative approaches to social discourse do not address cultural irregularities, ambiguities or paradoxes within an organisation's culture, which was a central concern for this doctoral research.

The literature on cultural control in organisations is also examined in Chapter Two. The debates and critiques centre around a discussion that highlight the increasing sophistication of control through the top-down management of culture (Kunda, 2009). Notable literatures were examined, including dimensions and relations of power and surveillance (Foucault, 2019) socialisation (Child, 1954; Van Maanen, 1976; Van Maanen & Schein, 1977), organisational values (Schein, 1975) and rules (Van Maanen, 1979). Kunda's (2009) concept of normative

control was significant in this regard since it corresponds to an organisation's ideology promoting consensus through the management of 'culture.' While early control theories were briefly accounted for in this review, notably, Scientific Management, functionalist literature concerning organisational control was out of scope for this thesis.

As mentioned, Chapter Two also analysed concepts relating to identity and the self. This review was not exhaustive, rather it highlights key sociological literatures to explore the concept of identity and the self. From the sociological perspective, the self-concept is analysed through patterns of social interaction (Child, 1954; Van Maanen, 1976). Specifically, this thesis was primarily concerned with sociological literatures within the humanistic and interpretivist orientation in order to examine the self during front stage and back stage (Goffman, 1959) displays within the organisational setting, hence positivist psychological literatures were out of scope for this thesis.

Chapter Three proposes an interpretative conceptual framework for the analysis of organisational culture, subcultures, normative control and the self. This conceptual framework was designed to facilitate an analysis of the empirical data in a way that fulfils what Cohen (2002) insists is a critical requirement for those who research the self-consciousness of others. As Cohen stated, social scientists must 'address the question of the self since not to do so is to risk misunderstanding and, therefore, misrepresenting, the people who we claim to know and who we represent to others' (2002: 4). In addition, Chapter Three discusses research paradigms and finer level concepts including the assumptions that informed the research paradigms that underpinned this doctoral research. Kuhn's (1970) notions concerning the evolving nature of research paradigms were explored and provided the necessary grounding for this thesis. Burrell and Morgan's (1979) interpretivist and radical humanist paradigms provided a finer level

framing for which to study and interpret the organisation's culture and its various subcultures. Martin's (2001) three perspectives of organisational culture, as well as Martin and Siehl's (1983) and Meyerson and Martin's (1987) concepts of organisational subcultures were incorporated into the conceptual framework which enables attention to an analysis of enhancing, orthogonal and counter subcultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). Chapter Three also introduces the scholarship on emic and etic approaches (Pike, 1968). In this regard, the approach to etic concepts includes attention to ideology (Geertz, 1973), managerial ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992) and normative control (Kunda, 2009). In addition, the conceptual framework draws on Goffman's (1959) front stage and back stage concepts and Van Maanen's (1979) various sites of enactment, including scenes, encounters and relationships. Finally, Chapter Three explains how the conceptual components of the framework were fused together and applied through ethnographic and qualitative methods.

Chapter Four outlines the ethnographic and qualitative methodological approach adopted along with their epistemic and ontological strengths and weaknesses. Chapter Four also offers a complete framework for ethnographic data collection and analysis following Van Maanen's (2011) methodological staging components, notably, *Preparing for the Field*, *In the Field* and *The Write Up*. *Preparing for the Field* highlights all field work preparations, including the selection of Service NSW as the organisation of research and the field site – the McKell Building located at the Haymarket district in Sydney. In addition, important ethical considerations and sensitivities concerning participant confidentiality and anonymity are addressed. The second methodological stage, *In The Field*, details the approach taken to record key organisational activities, including field observations, participant observations and semi-structured audio recorded interviews. In addition, this chapter outlines the analysis of auxiliary data sources collected during field work, such as annual reports, grey literatures and information sources

available on the Service NSW intranet and website, as well as other important NSW government websites. The third methodological component, *The Write Up*, highlights the approach taken for the preparation of fieldnotes and the participant interview data, notably, the process of data interpretation and coding for theme development. Chapter Four also offers a reflexive piece by documenting the field work limitations experienced by the researcher due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter Five presents the context of the Service NSW case study, a Not-For-Profit (NFP) government agency. Here, the organisation's culture is considered in relation to the Australian political sphere and the factors that affect public sector management in NSW, the social context encompassing the State's demographic diversity, the NSW public sector providing the political and organisational context for Service NSW and its partner agencies and, finally, the Service NSW organisational structure and its espoused culture of customer centricity which is focused on the end-to-end customer experience. In this regard, attention is also given to the chronology of activities that the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) engaged in to promote a customer centric policy in order to facilitate alignment with the NSW Premier's goals (NSW, 2021). Chapter Five begins with an overview of Public Management, New Public Management (NPM) and Post New Public Management as this scholarship frames the approach taken to the administration of Service NSW and the management of its 'DNA' culture. On this basis, the Service NSW 'DNA' Culture is considered from an integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001).

Chapter Six outlines the continuous efforts made by Service NSW sources of ideological influence to create an authoritative system of meaning. Here, the actions that sources of ideological influence took to create a distinct and irreplaceable customer centric social reality were documented and analysed. In this regard, performances by State Officials and Executive

Leaders who speak on the organisation's behalf were critically examined. The organisation's ideological sources of authority were shown to each possess a level of ideological influence relating to their visibility, proximity and familiarity to Service NSW staff members across the organisation's various membership groups. In this regard, ideological formulations were examined for particular organisational membership groups which reflect divisions or teams within the organisation, including the organisation's Support Office and Frontline units. In short, the concern of Chapter Six was to document and analyse the meaning sources of ideological authority induce through ritual and narrative across the organisation's various membership groups.

Chapter Seven provides descriptive accounts of the organisation's culture by introducing the social construction of the organisation's reality. Specifically, Chapter Seven introduces data that reflects the empirical application of an interpretivist research paradigm by documenting the local nature of cultural processes. From the interpretivist perspective, an overview of the organisational setting offers scholars an opportunity to identify with the various membership groups of the organisation, notably, Executive Leaders, Support Office and Frontline units. In addition, artefactual displays of the Service NSW McKell Building and the Haymarket Service Centre are documented. In this regard, artefactual displays taken during the course of field work include symbols (Martin & Powers, 1983; Wilkins, 1983), the organisation's institutionalised language (Martin & Meyerson, 1987; Bate, 1994), as well as the organisation's architecture, furniture, meetings, images and clothing (Morgan, 1998). The deeper cognitive or semiotic structures of the organisation's practices were reserved for later chapters of this thesis.

Chapter Eight discusses the various membership groups of the organisation, including Executive Leaders and Directors, Support Office and Frontline units. Chapter Eight argues that the organisation's Executive Leaders and Directors are the primary promoters of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture and, therefore, the primary agents of normative control (Kunda, 2009). By contrast, Support Office staff fluctuate most between agent vis-à-vis subject status of normative control (Kunda, 2009). In this regard, Support Office staff members act as conduits between Executive Leaders and Directors and the organisation's Frontline units. Support Office closely control information flows in both upward and downward directions. This observation suggests that Support Office staff members act as strong purveyors of the organisation's ideology. By contrast, Frontline staff members are considered the primary subjects of normative control since the organisation's ideological formulations incorporates the customer's experience for which the performance of Frontline staff members are closely monitored and measured.

Chapter Nine extends the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) by presenting an analysis of the organisation's ideological formulations, its various forms of normative control along with the underlying assumptions, values and various *Front Stage Sites of Enactment* through the organisation's presentation rituals. Several presentation rituals are presented, beginning with recruitment into the organisation focused on ensuring staff fit with the organisation's culture through the interview process. Chapter Nine also highlights how the staff member's behaviour is monitored, reinforced and corrected according to the norms of the organisation's 'DNA' culture. Chapter Nine argues, the cumulative effects of these mechanisms provide staff members with clear boundaries within which to display the *Front Stage Self* in alignment with the organisation's ideology (Geertz, 1973; Barely & Kunda, 1992) and its forms of normative control (Kunda, 2009). Chapter Nine presents a number of key presentation rituals which are

a ‘mechanism for transforming abstract formulations of the organisation’s ideology into the lived experience of members’ (Kunda, 2009: 93-4) through *Front Stage Sites of Enactment* including, *Front Stage Self Displays*, *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*, *Front Stage Scenes*, *Front Stage Encounters* and *Front Stage Relationships*.

Chapter Ten applies the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001) to identify the various subcultures in the organisation and to analyse subcultural differences. The differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001) highlights the dynamic nature of the organisation’s subcultures, notably, the way they waver between being in and out of alignment with the organisation’s ideology and its prescribed culture. Chapter Ten documents two specific and distinct functional and occupational subcultures that formed around the Support Office and Service Centres. Within the organisation’s subcultures, micro cultures were identified within them which function with their own sets of discreet rules and values. Chapter Ten utilises the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001) to further introduce additional *Sites of Enactment* including, *Back Stage Self Displays*, *Back Stage Encounters* and *Back Stage Scenes*. Of significance, Chapter Ten outlines the orthogonal and counter subcultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983) that emerged within Service NSW due to the establishment of the Department of Customer Service with the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model. An important point to be made is that the organisation’s various counter subcultures emerged during communication breakdowns in conjunction with the various escalation processes that occurred during the structural changes associated with the merger.

In Chapter Eleven, the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001) is applied to examine the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture. In this regard, attention is given to another *Site of Enactment* *Back Stage Relationships* to analyse the relationship among enacted cultural manifestations that were

transient and issue specific and, therefore, reflected ambiguity in relation to the Service NSW ‘DNA’ espoused culture. The data in Chapter Eleven reveals three transient and context specific issues that were, nonetheless, found to be widespread as experienced across each of the three organisation’s membership groups, notably, career roadblocks, social exclusion and suppressing the expression of critical thinking while staff performed their work. In this regard, the data presented in this chapter reflects several distinctions made between the Service NSW ‘DNA’ espoused culture and various aspects of the organisation’s enacted culture.

Chapter Twelve offers interpretations of the synthesised data by answering the research questions. In this regard, interpretations are made concerning neoliberal ideology and Post New Public Management practice from three organisational culture perspectives, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation (Martin, 2001). In addition, this chapter outlines the key findings of the study, including normative control and dramaturgical configurations of ‘the self’ across the organisation’s membership groups which correspond to this thesis’ various *Sites of Enactment*, notably *Front Stage Self Displays* and *Back Stage Self Displays*. Moreover, interpretations are made concerning the dramaturgical demands placed upon each of the membership groups within the organisation during significant disruption to Business as Usual (BAU) with the establishment of the Department of Customer Service and with the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model in combination with the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 bushfires and floods. In this regard, Chapter Twelve addresses the impact of government cost reductions in shaping the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture. Specifically, the synchronicity of these events appeared to impact the dramaturgical performances of staff members on the front and back stage (Goffman, 1959). Finally, Chapter Twelve discusses this thesis’ central argument, notably, that Post New Public Management theory and practice must consider the implications for public service employees in relation to work pressures which negatively impact their

subjective experience when operating in alignment with a customer centric model of culture in an effort to achieve goals that are underpinned by public policy. Finally, the conclusion to the thesis presents this study's contributions to scholarship, the main research findings, research limitations and implications along with future qualitative and quantitative research possibilities.

To summarise, this thesis draws on ethnography and qualitative research methods to explore the impact of neoliberal ideology on Post New Public Management practice within a NSW Public Service organisation, Service NSW from the perspective of employees across the occupational community during machinery of government changes, the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 bushfires and floods. This thesis utilised an interpretative conceptual framework that encompassed key concepts from diverse bodies of knowledge, including organisational culture, normative control and sociological literatures pertinent to conceptions of 'the-self' to answer the research questions, contribute to organisational and management literatures and, most significantly, to offer empirical data that covers the literary oversights as highlighted at the outset of this introduction. Next, Chapter Two reviews the key literatures pertinent to organisational culture, cultural control and conceptions of self.

Chapter Two

A Review of the Literature:

Organisational Culture, Cultural Control and The Self

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature from diverse bodies of knowledge and the key scholarly debates concerning organisational culture, cultural control and sociological literatures pertinent to conceptions of self. These bodies of knowledge are relevant to this doctoral research because together, these bodies of knowledge provide the necessary foundation for which to answer the research questions. As part of this review, attention is given to the conceptual and empirical gaps associated with each body of knowledge.

To begin this literature review, the first section analyses the literature on organisational culture, a subject that has sustained critical scholarly debate propelled by the vast amounts of conceptual and empirical literature since the 1990s when it became extremely popular in management and organisational studies. The review of organisational culture offered in this chapter highlights multifaceted arguments of past and more recent literatures encompassing both dualisms and paradoxes academics have grappled with including normative and critical perspectives.

The first section outlines the central themes and counter-claims of the most prominent debates pertaining to organisational culture, which demonstrate the progression of academic thought with respect to the word ‘culture,’ reflecting upon the diverse range of meanings the term conveys. These meanings are fundamentally dependent upon how organisational culture is

perceived to be best analysed, as well as the motivations and influences behind the methodological choices that academics have adopted to investigate the phenomenon. For instance, epistemologically, the meaning of culture could be interpreted ‘metaphorically,’ or as a ‘variable’ (Smircich, 1983: 340-47). According to Geertz’s, culture is ‘not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning’ (1973: 5). Therefore, organisational culture literatures of a positivist nature, both conceptually and empirically which search for generalisations by way of questionnaires and Likert scales which belong to functionalist science were out of scope for this review.

The second section of this review examines the literature pertaining to cultural control in organisations. For a number of scholars, cultural control is viewed as a form of tyranny (Baritz, 1960; Kunda, 2009). By contrast, other scholars view cultural control as imperative to propel an organisation’s strategic agenda (Schein, 1990; Starkey, 1998). Notable literatures examined in the review of cultural control include relations of power and surveillance (Foucault, 2019), behavioural socialisation (Child, 1954; Van Maanen, 1976; Van Maanen & Schein, 1977) and adherence to company values (Schein, 1990). Further, Kunda’s (2009) concept of normative control is discussed in relation to its influence upon an employee’s subjective experience to reflect alignment with an organisation’s values, behavioural and social norms. From this perspective, normative control is ideologically fuelled, it drives employees’ thoughts, emotions and actions by way of careful cultural management. While earlier literatures discussing cultural control are briefly accounted for in this review, positivist literatures examining cultural control in organisations were out of scope for this thesis.

The third section of this review examines identity and conceptions of the self. As mentioned, this thesis is concerned with humanistic and interpretative methods for the study of

organisational culture. Therefore, this review is not exhaustive by design, rather it gives careful attention to fundamental concepts and investigations of identity and conceptions of the self through two bodies of knowledge, notably, sociology and psychology. From the sociological perspective, the self-concept is analysed in patterns of social interaction through participant observation. By contrast, psychological literatures tend to focus on concepts and empirical investigation of identity constructs, more so, by way of positivist methods (Gecas, 1982; Black & Reynolds, 2016) and were, therefore, excluded from this review. Within the scholarship on sociology, there are two major and several minor variants concerning identity and conceptions of the self. The key debates expounded in these two orientations also reflect the methodological divisions between the social sciences, notably, the humanistic and interpretative preference set against the positivistic and nomothetic methodological orientation. Therefore, positivistic and nomothetic sociological literatures for the analysis of identity and conceptions of the self were out of scope for this thesis.

Organisational Culture

According to Parker, 'two events firmly established modern organisational culturalism,' notably, a university conference in Champaign-Urbana and an article written by Pettigrew (1979) featured in *Administration Science Quarterly* highlighting the significance of cultural language in the organisational setting (2000: 9). Concurrently, an interest in studying cultures in organisations was sparked by Japan's economic success during the 1980s to early 1990s, which attracted the attention of America's managerial elites (Parker, 2000). One key realisation that emerged from this success was that Japanese companies had created cultures where employees felt a sense of belonging. To understand the rationale and the methods behind cultures of this sort, Ouchi (1981) produced a typology that highlighted the differences and commonalities between traditional American organisations (Type A), Japanese organisations (Type J) and an

amalgamation of the two (Type Z). Ouchi (1981) also introduced the clan structure, a contemporary family-like view of operationalising organisations by treating employees as loyal, family members (Parker, 2000). The clan structure, as opposed to traditional bureaucratic and market structures, offered senior leaders an alternative way to conceptualise and operationalise the interests of their employees. The clan structure, therefore, was described as central to employee interests. As Ouchi stated:

Each individual is effectively told what to do just what that person wants ... The socialisation of all to a common goal is so complete and the capacity of the system to measure the subtleties of contributions over the long run is so exact that individuals will naturally seek to do that which is in the common good (Ouchi, 1981: 84-5).

Moreover, Ouchi's focus concerned internalised values that he proposed should be written in organisational mission and philosophy statements. Ouchi's (1981) research empowered management and the increased level of control over employees appeared to produce win-win solutions, both for employers and their employees while concurrently legitimising Japanese organisational norms and conventions. However, despite the outward appearance of consensus within organisations, another problem surfaced. Specially, strict inclusion criteria determined who was to be embraced as part of the so called, 'clan' (Parker, 2000). As Parker put it, 'Ouchi's excellent "Type Z" organisations are like well-run military units – only the fittest survive and the *esprit de corps* of the team ensures their fitness' (2000: 15).

In rapid succession, Waterman and Peters' (1982) *In Search of Excellence*, analysed America's Best-Run companies and indicated how various Japanese management techniques were, in fact, already operational in American industries. Significant contributions to the growing

scholarship on cultures within American organisations included Wilkins (1983), Martin, Feldman, Hatch and Sitkin (1983), Hickman and Silva (1985), Kilmann, Saxton and Serpa (1985), Sethia and Glinow (1985) and Schein (1990), who helped to shape the way that America's senior leaders could improve management of their employees. Handy's (1985) 'best fit' analogy had wide success by depicting four types of culture, including: the 'power culture' - entrepreneurial organisations that were highly competitive and orientated towards the individual; the 'role culture' - bureaucratically natured and operating in fairly stable environments; the 'task culture' - project or matrix orientations found in unstable and rapidly changing environments, and; 'person culture' - an anti-culture serving employees who chose to be part of it.

Relatedly, literature by Graves (1986), Sims and Gioia (1986), Ornstein (1986), Dandridge (1983; 1986; 1988), Jaskolka, Beyer and Trice (1985), Dellheim (1987) and Trice and Beyer (1985; 1991) promoted a consensus approach to managing organisational culture. Deal and Kennedy's (1988) *Corporate Cultures*, detailed how managers could develop strong cultures by espousing values. Moreover, cultural terms like 'myths,' 'symbols,' 'stories' and 'legends,' previously defined and applied in earlier anthropological monographs, presented new and promising ways to 'manage culture,' a movement that sought to elevate 'managers into heroes' (Parker, 2000: 10). As the scholarship grew, so did the conceptual definitions. Several of these conceptual definitions were rather similar with slight differences centred around the meaning of a 'shared culture' (Schein, 1983: 14). For instance, Davis (1984) argued that culture within an organisation reflects patterns of shared beliefs and values that give staff members of an organisation meaning by providing them with rules for behaviour. From this perspective, the meaning of a shared culture swiftly made its way into managerial rhetoric notwithstanding interests that continued to promote entrepreneurial hero-like values. Schein (1983; 1985; 1991;

2010), a leading scholar in organisational culture studies during the 1980s proposed a three-tiered concentric framework that included basic assumptions, norms and values as well as artefacts. As Schein saw it:

Organisational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions which a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which have worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1983: 14).

According to Schein (1983), the artefact level of analysis represents cultural phenomena that is most tangible in terms of our sensory experience. In Schein's (2010) view, artefacts include phenomena that you experience including what you would feel, hear and see when encountering a newfound group in a foreign culture. Artefacts encompass the architecture, language, behavioural displays including social norms as well myths and stories of a given cultural group. Underpinning the artefacts of the organisation's culture are the espoused beliefs and values that encompass the objectives and philosophies of a group. This second level of analysis, according to Schein's (1983) framework is located in the middle of a three-tiered concentric model, each layer reflecting deeper and increasingly implicit cultural data. By unearthing implicit cultural knowledge, Schein (1983) claimed that the organisation's basic underlying assumptions, that is, the taken for granted beliefs and values manifest as a system of meaning through positive social reinforcement.

However, criticisms concerning Schein's (1983) normative approach to the study of organisational culture emerged from the outset. For instance, interpretivists, Martin and Siehl (1983), criticised Schein's model by revealing that multiple subcultures can coexist within an

organisation. Specifically, Martin and Siehl (1983) called into question the conceptualisation of culture as one monolithic block whose primary function is aimed to coalesce various components or elements of an organisation. Further critiques were proposed by Morgan (1998) who questioned the use of culture as a tool by which managerial elites manipulate in order to increase employee performance. In addition, Morgan (1998) criticised the oversimplification of normative conceptualisations of organisational culture, specifically its reduction to a set of distinct variables such as norms, stories, values and beliefs, variables that Morgan (1998) conceived would likely be documented and manipulated by those in positions of authority.

The literature for managing an organisation's culture was near exclusively based on advancing managerial interests. According to Van Maanen and Barley (1985), very few studies apart from the limited assortment of earlier anthropological literature reflected the views of marginal employees. Accordingly, Van Maanen and Barley (1985) noted that social scientists focused on studying culture within an organisation from the perspective of managerial elites and neglected lower mass populations. Moreover, the scholarship prior to and during the 1990s was by and large preoccupied with Anglo-Saxon individualism to the exclusion of other racial, ethnic or cultural groups, a trend resulting in rather static views of cultural consensus (Schein, 1983; 1985; O'Reilly, 1989; Denison, 1990; Pheysey, 1993; Trice & Beyer, 1993; Altman & Baruch, 1998). Interestingly, at this time, Jaggar (1983) argued that staff members positioned lower within organisational hierarchies may have different views of their organisation's culture. As Jaggar put it:

Many members of the ruling class are likely to be convinced by their own ideology; either they fail to perceive the suffering of the oppressed or they believe it is freely chosen, deserved, or inevitable ... Oppressed groups, by contrast, suffer directly from

the system that oppresses them ... The pervasiveness, intensity and relentlessness of their suffering constantly push oppressed groups toward a realisation that something is wrong with the prevailing social order. Their pain provides them with a motivation ... for criticising accepted interpretations of reality, and for developing new and less distorted ways of understanding the world (Jaggar, 1983: 370).

In this regard, functionalism and methods rooted in the positivist approach for the study of organisational culture were claimed by interpretivist scholars to be both overly simplistic and misleading. While functionalism and structuralism presented legitimate ways for managing culture, they ignored the possibility of subcultures and contested viewpoints (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). Smircich's (1983) distinction between the managerial orientation, *culture has*, and the anthropological orientation, *culture is*, further polarised the scholarship. The former posits that managers are able to affect organisational cultural change. For instance, a construct such as an employee engagement and commitment survey can be controlled through sense-making. In this regard, by controlling the questions and answers in culture surveys through sense-making and by distributing favourable results across the occupational community, managers are able to better manage how employees think and feel. From this perspective, culture is used as a method for control to gain competitive advantage for organisational ends.

By studying organisational cultures through anthropological methods, in other words, by applying an interpretivist lens, research on cultures within organisations focused on corporate ideology, language and other symbolic forms (Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Barley, 1983; Turner, 1986; Kunda & Van Maanen 1999; Parker, 2000; Kunda, 2009). Interpretivists, unlike functionalists and structuralists paid careful attention to the micro details of an organisation's

various cultures and their employees across all levels of the occupational community. This finer level of analysis included the description and interpretation of the organisation's institutionalised language, for instance, slang, jargon, acronyms and technicality to better understand the subjective experience of organisational members. Smircich's (1983) definition of organisational culture highlighted the richness of detail favoured by interpretivists. As Smircich put it:

In a particular situation the set of meanings that evolve gives a group its own ethos, a distinctive character, which is expressed in patterns of belief (ideology), activity (norms and rituals), language and other symbolic forms through which organisation members both create and sustain their view of the world and image of themselves in the world. The development of a worldview with its shared understanding of group identity, purpose and direction are products of the unique history, personal interactions and environmental circumstances of the group (Smircich, 1983: 56).

This humanistic approach to the study of organisational culture propelled the acceptance of interpretivism by describing, in meticulous detail, the everyday manifestations of organised life. However, in many respects, this scholarship failed to yield deeper structural insights other than descriptions of organisational members (Parker, 2000). As Parker (2000) articulated, the interpretivist approach for the study of organisational culture is not without criticisms because there is a lack of interest in uncovering the deeper structures of culture in attempting to be faithful to actor descriptions. Interpretivists were accused of 'overstressing the micro-social' and ignoring 'the link of everyday life to wider contexts' (Parker, 2000: 51). As Parker (2000) argued, interpretivism did not go as far as other methods of cultural analysis in revealing the complexities, ambiguities, paradoxes and contradictions of cultures in workplaces because it

did not decode the meaning of culture for its members. Yet, the legacy of the interpretivist research method proved to be fundamental to the study of organisational culture, because unlike functionalism and structuralism, interpretivism offered something valuable to the scholarship, notably, detailed descriptions of employees in their workplaces.

Relatedly, literature by Reily (1983), Bartunek (1984), Jamison (1985), Turner (1986), Mills (1988), Rofel (1989), Cox and Nkomo (1990), Rosen (1991), Van Maanen, Frost and Moore (1991) and Utoft (2020), analysed overlapping and contrasting organisational subcultures. These studies generated divergent portraits of organisational life by critically analysing cultures that revealed deviant cases or non-conforming organisational subcultures. In this respect, Meyerson and Martin's (1987) three perspectives of organisational culture made an important contribution to the scholarship.

Meyerson and Martin's (1987) three perspectives of organisational culture clearly conceptualises three views of an organisation's culture, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation. The integration perspective pays attention toward manifestations of a culture that have mutually consistent interpretations (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). An integration portrait of an organisation's culture sees consensus throughout the organisation. From this perspective, organisational culture is that which is clear, in other words, where ambiguity is excluded (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). By contrast, the differentiation perspective focuses on organisational cultural manifestations that have inconsistent interpretations. From the differentiation perspective, cultural consensus exists within an organisation, but only at subordinate levels, notably, through an analysis of an organisation's various subcultures (Meyerson & Martin, 2001). Martin (2001) explained that subcultures can be mutually reinforcing and may exist in conflict or remain independent. Martin further claimed that

subcultures may be bound by 'occupational lines, including managerial, professional and or blue-collar employees' and may also 'proceed along functional or vertical lines, or on the basis of networks of personal contract at work, friendship or demographic identities such as race, ethnicity or gender' (2001: 103). In addition, organisational subcultures may have rigid or blurred boundaries or may have their boundaries deliberately blurred (Kondo, 1990; Kunda, 2009). Some organisational members reinforce and reify boundaries in an attempt to remain safe and secure (Martin, 2001). According to Martin (2001), members within organisations may have a personal interest in keeping subcultural boundaries intact. For instance, a senior executive may show personal 'kindness' and 'vulnerability' to avoid seeming snobbish to lower ranking employees (Martin, 2001: 355). By contrast, members within organisations may destroy or undermine others making the boundaries of subcultures ambiguous. In this regard, senior executives may reinforce status differences by way of 'plush offices' and 'beautiful artwork' which is vastly different from the 'repetitive drone of data processing centres' (Martin, 2001: 336). The physical environment, hence, may be used as a tool for cultural control through reifying and exaggerating subcultural boundaries (Gagliardi, 1990; Pfeffer, 1992). Most significantly, Martin (2001) argued that differentiation studies that examine organisational subcultures are important because they allow for the expression of dissenting voices that are usually, and often deliberately, silenced or ignored. According to Lucas (1987), Mumby (1987; 1988), Alvesson (1996), Clegg and Hardy (1996), conceptual and empirical research that investigates organisational subcultural conflict is crucial because it enables a fuller exploration of the workings of power.

It is important to note that subcultures are not created by leaders but are rather influenced both from inside and outside the organisation (Martin, 2001). Meyerson and Siehl's (1983) research distinguished three types of subcultures, notably, enhancing subcultures, orthogonal

subcultures and counter subcultures. Enhancing subcultures support the dominant culture (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). Orthogonal subcultures encompass functional, occupational, national and ethnic cultures. Finally, counter subcultures are in disagreement with the dominant culture. In this regard, the dominant culture is reflective of the organisation's prescribed culture, in other words, the integrationist view of cultural consensus (Martin, 2001). In addition, an organisation can be composed of diverse organisational subcultures sharing some integrating elements of the dominant culture (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). Martin and Siehl (1983) demonstrated this empirically by revealing how some counter subcultural artefacts including language, jargon and rituals can deride a dominate culture while others authenticate it. Yet, while ambiguity is discarded to the interstices between an organisation's various subcultures, Meyerson and Martin's (1987) fragmentation perspective fills this deeper empirical void by conceptualising the relationship among cultural manifestations that are neither consistent nor inconsistent (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). From the fragmentation perspective, the focus is on cultural ambiguity rather than clarity and consensus. Meyerson and Martin's (1987) three perspectives of organisational culture, therefore, takes a different position in relation to organisational cultural manifestations, notably, the orientation toward consensus and equally toward cultural ambiguity.

An excellent example reflecting Meyerson and Martin's (1987) three levels of analysis of culture is Kunda's (2009) critical ethnography *Engineering Culture*, which exposed both consensus as well as the complexities and ambiguities of 'High Tech's' culture. The exploration of fragmentary cultural perspectives is important for critical scholars because this orientation specifically acknowledges cultural ambiguity as well as transient and context specific dynamics within a social group. As Morgan put it, 'when a high-status group interacts with a low-status group, or when groups with very different occupational attitudes are placed in a relation of dependence,

organisations can become plagued by a kind of subcultural warfare,’ where ‘different norms, beliefs and attitudes to time, efficiency or service can create all kinds of contradictions and dysfunctions’ (1998: 133). As Parker (2000) explained, organisational culture is a topic of immense political and epistemological focus because it can be utilised by managers to invoke a sense of control which invites subordinates to accept that the organisation’s culture is good for them. This political focus is exemplified in Sennett’s (1998) *Corrosion of Character*, which outlined the consequences of three IBM programmers who adhered to the organisation’s culture as loyal and dedicated employees. Having believed in the corporate culture, it was claimed that IBM controlled their careers, playing out a scenario that was not of their own creation.

The research complexities and subsequent debates concerning the analysis of organisational culture have remained since the turn of the century. This literature review highlighted the tensions between normative and critical approaches for the study of culture in organisations. The most popular approach for the analysis of organisational culture pertains to both functionalist and structuralist methodological approaches (Bjerregaard, Luring, & Klitmøller, 2009). The positivist approach focuses on consensus (Ouchi & Maguire 1975; Waterman & Peters, 1982; Kilmann, Saxton & Serpa, 1985; Schein, 1985; 1990; 1991). By contrast, the interpretivist approach treats culture as emergent and associated with the dynamics of power and control within organisational settings (Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Kunda & Van Maanen, 1999; Martin, 2001; Kunda, 2009). The next section of this review highlights various literatures reflecting cultural control in organisations.

Cultural Control

This section of the literature review analyses both conceptual and empirical debates relating to cultural control in organisations. Literature significant to this scholarship emerged during the

early twentieth century where ‘human relations theory’ was considered ‘the first move to enlightenment within the field of organisational behaviour’ (Parker, 2000: 32). Here, human relations could be viewed as an early history of culturalism. Human relations as a field of study were popularised by Elton Mayo, which claimed to bring ‘the social into the study of work’ (Parker, 2000: 32). Specifically, two propositions shaped the understanding of human relations. Firstly, ‘informal patterns of interaction set up expectations and constraints that could not be explained simply by reference to an organisational chart or a desired monetary reward’ (Parker, 2000: 32). Secondly, ‘employee’s beliefs, attitudes and values are brought with them from non-work contexts and impinge upon the way they think about themselves and their organisation’ (Parker, 2000: 32). In essence, human relations sought to assist elites to better manage and control employees by socially engineering the ‘irrationalities of ordinary human beings’ (Parker, 2000: 32). Thus, whilst the term ‘culture’ was near non-existent during the early twentieth century, suspicions concerning managerial control over workers surfaced. For instance, Whyte’s (1956) *The Organisation Man*, highlighted that managerial cultural control was a sophisticated method of manipulation and a form of tyranny. Similarly, Edward claimed, ‘workers owe not only a hard day’s work to the corporation but also their demeanour and affections’ (1979: 148). Barnard (1983) argued that leaders must manage culture in an organisation to develop collective conscience. According to Walton (1985), managerial control over culture shifted from overt to covert means. As Walton argued:

Worker’s respond best and most creatively not when they are tightly controlled by management, placed in narrowly defined jobs and treated like an unwelcome necessity, but instead, when they are given broader responsibilities, encouraged to contribute and helped to take satisfaction in their work (Walton, 1985: 76).

From Walton's perspective, employees seek to contribute, more so, when they are provided with a sense of freedom and autonomy to perform their work. One way to achieve this freedom is to control culture through methods of behavioural socialisation. According to Caplow (1954), the normative process of socialisation is based on an organisational ideology that serves to link the organisation to wider purposes and reinforce an employee's commitment to the organisation by reference to a common cause. If the ideology is accepted by the new employee, it is argued, a sort of psychological barrier prohibits the individual deserting the organisation (Caplow, 1954). Therefore, the primary goal concerning socialisation in the company is to gain the new employee's acceptance of the organisation's normative systems and its corresponding ideology.

Taking the above views together, socialisation within organisations can be viewed as methods of cultural control. Child's (1954) literature on cultural control addressed the workings of organisational power and structure. Child (1954) argued that behavioural socialisation methods, particularly rewards and punishments tie employees' emotions and commitment to the company. In Child's view, 'behaviour may be influenced by arranging and controlling rewards so that every additional increment of effort displayed by the learner is associated with a commensurate increment of reward' (1954: 67). In the same vein, Kelman (1958) argued that individuals must demonstrate socialisation in three ways. Firstly, by demonstrating compliance by accepting the organisation's demands which enable the individual to gain specific rewards while concurrently avoiding certain punishments (Kelman, 1958). Secondly, the individual must demonstrate identification with the organisation because she or he desires to establish or maintain a fulfilling relationship which is self-defining and also with other individuals and groups (Kelman, 1958). Thirdly, the individual internalises the organisation's influence because the content of the induced behaviour, that is, the ideas and actions for which the behaviour is

comprised of is perceived as intrinsically rewarding (Kelman, 1958; Van Maanen, 1976). Similarly, Brim (1966) suggested that employees must demonstrate several attributes including an intrinsic desire to display fitting behaviour in alignment with expected role requirements in pursuing appropriate organisational ends. Relatedly, Schein (1968) argued that organisational socialisation implies that an employee may be forced to relinquish certain attitudes, values and behaviours. Schein called this the 'price of membership' (1968: 3). Schein (1968) further explained that organisational members acquire new social learnings from a variety of sources, some of which include colleagues and managers and through receiving rewards and experiencing punishments. However, Schein (1974) also argued that social experiences that are capable of changing an individual's internal orientation to the organisation can only occur in key relationships that are valued by the organisational member.

Relatedly, according to Crozier (1973), the organisation is a chaotic and unstable social system, checked only by methods of control. Crozier (1973) argued that the organisation is stratified through different functional groups which struggle for power and status. From Crozier's (1973) perspective, elements of social control which inhibit the power struggle can create cooperation among subgroups which is vital for organisational survival. As Crozier (1973) argued, mechanisms of social control may include hierarchical order, institutional and communication structure, restricting access to information, workflow design, technical setting of jobs and various economic incentives as well as the realisation of interdependency. In other words, the manner in which members fit into the status order of the social network is claimed to be crucial for organisational survival, particularly as it relates to the acquirement of favourable attitudes, behaviours and values from the perspective of managerial elites (Crozier, 1973).

Van Maanen (1976) described alternative behavioural control methods in relation to social control, notably, training, apprenticeships, debasement experiences and co-optation. Specifically, Van Maanen (1976) viewed training as a mode of socialisation that develops employee skills and directs behaviour toward imparting the abilities and knowledge necessary to perform a designated role. Van Maanen (1976) viewed apprenticeship as a socialisation process because it transforms a new employee by those already deemed experienced enough to indoctrinate the new member with formal and informal cultural rules. Van Maanen (1976) claimed that those responsible for such tasks are typically considered role models within the organisation. Van Maanen (1976) argued that debasement experiences encompass resocialisation processes, often through co-optation whereby old behavioural dispositions are diffused and replaced with new dispositions that reflect the organisation's desired norms, values and rules.

Rules, according to Van Maanen (1979) are a strong form of cultural control. Van Maanen argued three types of rules control behaviour, notably, formal, cultural and contextual rules. As Van Maanen (1979) conceives it, formal rules are the least binding of all three rules because they refer to explicit, usually codified and written rules that attempt to specify what organisational members may or may not do in particular workplace situations. From Van Maanen's (1979) perspective, formal rules represent a priori plans through which the actions of organisational members can be directed. Van Maanen (1979), explained that the situations to which formal rules apply are varied and are continually subject to differing interpretations because any formal rule must first be interpreted by its would-be users as to its situational applicability. As Van Maanen claimed (1979), when managers are focused upon the new employee's ability to absorb the appropriate demeanour, he or she is more likely to begin to

think and feel like an integral member of an organisation. In this view, formal rules work on preparing a person to adopt a particular status in the organisation (Van Maanen, 1979).

Van Maanen (1979) also argued that cultural rules relate to the proper forms of interpersonal behaviour an individual learns while becoming a member of a group within an organisation. As Van Maanen (1979) explained, cultural rules have implicit characters and, therefore, they are generally recognised only if they have been breached. Finally, according to Van Maanen (1979), contextual rules are mostly tied to immediate situations and may refer to how work gets done, how emotions are to be managed, how members must act in front of others and what can legitimately be discussed interpersonally and as part of groups. While contextual rules do not always contradict cultural or formal rules, on occasion they appear to. As Van Maanen stated:

The difference between what people say and what they do is therefore problematic though it is hardly the great mystery some social scientists have made it out to be. People cannot always say with any certainty what they will do until they discover the particular situation in which they are to act. Only then can certain rules be developed and applied which can guide their behaviour (Van Maanen, 1979: 86).

Clegg (1981) concurred by explaining that rules formulate the structure which underlies the organisation's surface reality. From Clegg's perspective, rules in all forms, 'control, constrain, guide' and define 'social action' (1981: 45). Rules can be both written and unwritten as well as formal and informal (Clegg, 1981). Rules can also be interpreted by organisational members by the explanations that managerial elites provide to cover their actions and the actions of others in the workplace (Clegg, 1981).

In later research, according to Mills and Mills, ‘organisations arise out of the desire of some individuals or groups,’ for instance, ‘entrepreneurs, shareholders, policy makers, philanthropists and social activities to achieve certain ends’ (2017: 52). With these desires set, individuals are recruited, coordinated and controlled to achieve various goals through a series of rules. The authors’ perspective is clear, ‘rules simultaneously serve to contain differences of opinion, beliefs and values while resulting in practices that give the appearance of unity of purpose’ (2017: 53). Rules interpreted in this way reflect a differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001) of an organisation’s culture. According to Mills and Murgatroyd (1991), rules for behaviour are reconciled by individuals in alignment with their own sensemaking and in congruence with the organisation’s culture. Mills and Mills believed that rules also arise out of ‘the enactment of organisational actors who differ in their rule-making powers’ (2017: 54). In this view, Mills and Mills (2009; 2017) refer to Weick’s (1995) notion of sensemaking whereby employees conceptualise ‘gendered rules’ through ‘enactment,’ which is the ‘construction of a social reality through action that is then (retrospectively) made sense of by the actor or actors involved’ (2017: 64). They argued that sensemaking directs individuals to explore how particular rule activities can serve or maintain a gendered normative ordering (Mills & Mills (2009; 2017). Thurlow explained that ‘critical sensemaking puts sensemaking in context by including issues of power and privilege in the process of understanding why some language, social practices and experiences become meaningful for individuals and others do not’ (2010: 257). However, as Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) pointed out, rules play an essential role within the realms of a much larger, more complex and interconnected system of cultural control in organisations.

Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) argued that managers may attempt to build, sustain and elaborate cultural control in organisations in ways that are powerful yet relatively subtle,

specifically, through controlling the emotions of employees. In this way, Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) stated that systems of cultural control in organisations can build on top of each other. From Van Maanen and Kunda's (1989) perspective, forms of cultural control can shift within organisational settings over a period of time. Such interconnected control systems operate 'in a number of ways that extend from the simple, explicit, contractual and individually centred varieties to the complex, implicit, assumptive and collective varieties' (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989: 88). Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) argued that four interconnected control systems are at work. Firstly, the market control of labour where each individual sells his or her labour to the highest bidder by delivering products or services in exchange for monetary compensation. This form of control is due, in large part, to the 'light but guiding touch of the invisible hand' (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989: 89). The second form of control, notably, technical control, relates to the national markets served by large organisations where 'workers are subject to the authority of the production process itself,' a hallmark of Scientific Management where employees act as interchangeable 'parts, services or products they produce' (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989: 89). The third form of control corresponds to bureaucratic devices that enable managers to stem resistance to technical control (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). In addition, Van Maanen and Kunda claimed that another form of managerial control relates directly to bureaucracy, 'a form of control that deals directly with disruption and disorder and aims to tie individual interests to those of the organisation' (1989: 89). Van Maanen and Kunda associate these forms of control in relation to 'object, body, mind and heart' (1989: 88-91). As Van Maanen and Kunda put it:

market control focuses only on the outcome of labour (object control); technical control acts primarily on the overt behaviour of contracted employees (body control); with both forms of control having 'little or no regard for the thought or feelings of workers.'

Bureaucratic control encompasses intricate administrative procedures which are designed to justify and direct individual contributions to the organisation by focusing on the calculations of self-interest made by employees, in other words, (mind control) through career systems, performance appraisals, universal selection and recruitment standards, rewards for seniority and pension plans, in essence, tools and devices that are utilised to assist in 'stabilising the workforce' to 'make predictable organisation work' (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989: 89-90).

Control of object, body and mind 'can be pushed to one more level, the control of the heart' which is the quintessential form of cultural control in the organisational setting (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989: 89). Cultural control, according to Van Maanen and Kunda, aims to:

influence and spark the felt involvement and attachment of organisational members (emotional control) through specific 'tools of the trade,' which are considered highly symbolic and brought to life through the 'dramatisation of ritual, myth and ceremony' (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989: 89).

Ritual, myth and ceremony are symbolic forms intended to 'act on the values, loyalties, sentiments and desires of employees' and used to 'combat the presumed negative and deadening effects of market, technical and bureaucratic forms of control' (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989: 89). In short, cultural control 'is a many-splintered thing' operating in a 'variety of ways' in organisations, including on a diverse workforce, 'few of whom are fully predisposed to submit fully to any one form' (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989: 91).

The perspectives proposed by Caplow (1954), Child (1954), Crozier (1973), Van Maanen (1976), Clegg (1981) and Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) suggest that managers systemise and

legitimise modes of cultural control through a process which purposefully seeks to shape and regulate the behaviour of employees within the social system of the organisation. From this perspective, Kilmann, Saxton and Serpa (1985) suggested corporate culture offers an organisation a life full of warm emotions for its employees. Ray explained that employees are 'merely emotional, symbol-loving and needing to belong to a superior entity or collective' (1986: 295). Schwartz (1987) argued that cultural control encourages employees to self-discipline by inducing feelings of anxiety, shame and guilt when employees feel they have fallen short of corporate values and interests. Similarly, Heydebrand claimed employees are carefully exposed to corporate values and invited to gain a sense of purpose and identity through 'social engineering' (1989: 344). Not dissimilar to Van Maanen's (1976) interpretation of socialisation, social engineering is a process of intense behavioural social programming through the use of various human resource management strategies (Heydebrand, 1989). Social engineering also includes the indoctrination of organisational values upon its members, a process that is claimed to 'strengthen the core organisational values in a way that excludes and eliminates all other conflicting values' (Heydebrand, 1989: 344).

Relatedly, Orwell (1989) explained the concept of double think, which suggests that when employees are ingrained with corporate values, their autonomy is secured. Double think, according to (Orwell, 1989) enables staff members to confirm a humanistic sense of self, one that is self-determining, without the responsibility that accompanies the making of existential choices between conflicting values. Orwell provided an exemplar quote, 'don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? Every concept that can ever be needed' is 'expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten' (1989: 55). This effort at cultural control by imprinting a value system upon members that motivates organisational commitment, loyalty and

productivity is also known as ‘normative control’ (Kunda, 2009). In exchange, the organisation promises self-actualising rewards. As Kunda explained, normative control is:

The attempt to elicit and direct the required efforts of members by controlling their underlying experiences, thoughts and feelings that guide their actions. Under normative control, members act in the best interest of the company, not because they are physically coerced, nor purely from an instrumental concern with economic rewards and sanctions. It is not just their behaviours and activities that are specified, evaluated and rewarded or punished. Rather, they are driven by internal commitment, strong identification with company goals and intrinsic satisfaction from work. These are elicited by a variety of managerial appeals, exhortations and actions (Kunda, 2009: 11).

For Kunda (2009), membership within an organisation is ‘founded not only on the behavioural or economic transactions that are traditionally associated with work organisations,’ but more crucially, on experiential transactions, notably, those transactions in which ‘symbolic rewards are exchanged for a moral orientation to the organisation’ (Kunda, 2009: 11). As Kunda put it, ‘In this transaction, a member role is fashioned and imposed which includes not only behavioural rules but articulated guidelines for experience’ (Kunda, 2009: 11). According to Kunda, ‘under normative control, it is the employee’s self - that ineffable source of subjective experience that is claimed in the name of the corporate interest’ (2009: 11).

Willmott contributed to this debate by arguing that management is concerned more so with fostering hegemonic and, rather, insidious forms of cultural control by subsuming individual identity and by inhibiting ‘critical [self]-reflection’ as well as individual choice (1993: 534). From Willmott’s (1993) perspective, strong cultures are seen as cultures that serve the interests of

management by limiting the capacity for individuals to reflect upon and assess different and competing value systems other than the dominant corporate ideology. In this way, Willmott (1993) argued that the expression of human identity and individuality in relation to values is overpowered by the value system of the organisation. Moreover, Willmott (1993) suggested that employees are particularly susceptible to cultural control mechanisms that validate systems of control because, above all, employees seek stability and security. Therefore, according to Willmott (1993), the choice to reflect upon competing values is unnecessary as long as employees feel and intrinsically believe that their needs are being met. Employees who feel and believe their needs are being met, consciously or not, may blur the boundaries between their conceptions of self and the organisation. This blurring homogenises norms and values whereby 'employees are rewarded for suspending attachments to ideas that confirm and reinforce the authority of those core values' (Willmott, 1993: 534). By contrast, Starkey (1998) argued that cultures contain moral autonomy, are intelligent and reflective and based in deep learning largely through commitment, not compliance. Starkey (1998) claimed that normative control, by and large, through the process of social integration is not assumed, rather it has to be worked for and attained so that it serves the best interests of all parties. Robertson and Swan (2003) studied the effects of normative control in Knowledge Intensive Firms (KIFs) and found that controlling culture with ambiguity averted resistance in relation to aspects of the organisational environment. Employees perceived that the organisation enabled them significant autonomy but were equally not aware that this autonomy was an imposed limitation (Robertson & Swan, 2003). Put differently, autonomy was used as a sophisticated mechanism of normative control to sustain appropriate perceptions and to motivate employees to remain dedicated.

The preceding literature review highlights the prominent debates concerning the progress of cultural control in organisational settings (Caplow, 1954; Child, 1954; Crozier, 1973; Van

Maanen, 1976; Clegg, 1981; Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989; Kunda, 2009). One side of the debate argues that forms of cultural control are earned and accepted as valid by staff members (Starkey, 1998). By contrast, the other view considers cultural control as invasive because it attempts to control the subjective experience of employees for organisational ends (Willmott, 1993; Kunda, 2009). The latter view, therefore, argues that normative control blurs an employee's subjective experience and conceptions of self to the organisation for commercial interests (Whyte, 1956; Kunda, 2009). The last section of this literature review analyses concepts related to identity and the self.

The Self

The earliest literature concerning the self arose toward the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Some notable sociological contributions include literature by James (1890), Cooley (1902), Thomas (1923) and Mead (1934). These scholars argued that the content and organisation of the self reflects the content and organisation of society. In short, the self reflects the responses and appraisals of others.

In Cooley's (1902) view, the self is a mirror where individuals see themselves reflected in the reactions of others. The premise behind the 'looking glass self' is that individuals gain feedback from others across situations and this is how individuals come to see themselves (Cooley, 1902: 2). These reflections invoke images of the self about how individuals appear to others and how others evaluate that appearance. This reflective experience, it is argued, incites feelings concerning evaluations made by others of that appearance through language (Mead, 1934). For Mead (1934), the self is a reflexive agent and develops in social interaction based on the use of human language. Mead (1934) also believed that the social character of language induces a selection of meanings by indicating them to both the self and to others. In this regard, Mead

(1934) argued that language experienced as social phenomena gives individuals a sense of control over their environment. In Mead's (1934) view, this process is made possible only through the use of language because it is through the interpretation of language that individuals come to understand the meanings of symbols. From Mead's (1934) perspective, interactions through the use of 'symbols, language and gestures convey, negotiate, manipulate and otherwise control the meanings we interpret from such interactions' (1934: 56). As Mead (1934) explained, the self emerges when it is a symbol to which it may then respond to any other symbol because the self is self-controlled.

A flourishing scholarship emerged during the middle of the twentieth century that developed Mead's (1934) contributions concerning language and the self, known as Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969; 1986). Symbolic interactionists argued that symbols could be decoded to reflect deeper meanings behind how the self develops. Decades later, concepts of identity emerged (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Turner, 1976). For instance, Berger and Luckman (1966) argued that identity is formed in social processes. As Berger and Luckman claimed, 'once crystallised,' identity 'is maintained, modified or even reshaped by social relations' (1966: 173). In other words, social structures inform both the formation and the maintenance of identity.

At the same time, other theoretical and empirical contributions were made by Goffman who offered candid interpretations in his book, *Presentations of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). According to Goffman (1959), appraisals made by others are based on reflections of self-presentations. Goffman (1959) claimed that all identities are dramaturgical operations of the self where individuals merely act out their identities in different social situations. As Goffman (1959) articulated, the dramaturgically prudent performer adapts his or her performance to current evidence and material conditions under which it must be staged. Performance requires self-

control, specifically, the ability to suppress emotional responses including controlling spontaneous feelings in order to present façades that conform to acceptable affective lines (Goffman, 1959). Put differently, performance acts adhere to status quo social norms and behaviours. As Goffman explained, it is ‘one’s face and voice to which dramaturgical performances are revealed ... affective responses must be concealed and an appropriate affective response must be displayed’ (1959: 211). In Goffman’s view, this emphasis upon carefully presenting the self in social situations is highly important because audiences prefer to be in the company of those who possess ‘tact’ (1959: 25). From Goffman’s (1959) perspective, individuals prefer to avoid negative or uncomfortable ‘scenes’ (1959: 205). Performers must be receptive to subtle hints in real time that are designed to direct behaviour and, therefore, performers must be ready to initiate behaviours that suggest those hints have not only been recognised, but accepted as valid. When performers comply with subtle hints by altering their behaviour, they simultaneously demonstrate dramaturgical loyalty, discipline and circumspection to their audiences (Goffman, 1959). These terms are what Goffman called defensive measures. As Goffman explained, defensive measures are:

used by performers to save their own show; they are used by audiences and outsiders to assist the performance in saving the performer’s show and measures the performers must enact in order to enable the audience and outsiders to employ protective measures on the performer’s behalf (Goffman, 1959: 207).

As perplexing as concepts of the self may be, Goffman (1959) maintained that individuals do not always act in accordance with their true self. In Goffman’s (1959) view, individuals stand in a double relationship concerning their imputed attributes, some of which feel correct and some of which they will not be able to accept as part of their self-definition. As Goffman (1959)

argued, individuals cannot fully control the entire impressions received of them in social encounters. Individuals, therefore, must be careful to avoid performance disruptions, otherwise known as ‘faux pas,’ where the performer unconsciously ‘projects a behaviour that destroys his or her own or team’s image’ (Goffman, 1959: 204). Unthoughtful acts or gestures are said to be sources of embarrassment and always result in some sort of personal consequence (Goffman, 1959).

Goffman’s (1959) explication of the self was based upon the individual as a rather reactive agent, in other words, on a performing self whose consciousness responded primarily to winning and losing in the game of social life. This game, as Goffman (1959) conceives it, is where individuals are presumed to have engaged by virtue of their membership rather than of their conscious decision to participate. Goffman (1959) offered finer conceptual definitions in relation to self-displays, notably, ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage’ performance acts. From this perspective, self-presentations are bound by ‘regions’ (1959: 109). Goffman claimed the ‘front stage’ is where members act in accordance to cultural and social standards. Specially, Goffman explained:

The performance of an individual in a front region may be seen as an effort to give the appearance that his or her activity in the region maintains and embodies certain standards. These standards seem to fall into two broad groupings. One grouping has to do with the way in which the performer treats the audience while engaged in talk with them or in gestural interchanges that are a substitute for talk. These standards are sometimes referred to as matters of politeness. The other group of standards has to do with the way in which the performer comports herself or himself while in visual or aural

range of the audience but not necessarily engaged in talk with them (Goffman, 1959: 110).

By contrast, according to Goffman, the 'back stage' is where members represent themselves with less dramaturgical prudence or care (1959: 129). Typically, the back stage may be defined as a place, 'where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted ... Here the performer can relax; she or he can drop his front; forgo speaking in lines, and step out of character' (Goffman, 1959: 114-15). As Goffman conceived it, 'back stage language consists of reciprocal naming, cooperative decision making, profanity ... use of dialect or sub-standard speech ... the front stage can be taken as the absence of this' (1959: 129). Goffman also suggested that performances can be learned, as he explained:

It does take deep skill, long training and psychological capacity to become a good stage actor. But this fact should not blind us to another one: that almost anyone can quickly learn a script well enough to give a charitable audience some sense of realness in what is being contrived before them (Goffman, 1959: 78).

Goffman pointed out that the most revealing times to observe 'impression management' is 'when a performer leaves the back region and enters where the audience is to be found ... at these moments one can detect a wonderful putting on and taking off character' (1959: 123). Similar interpretations were made by Stone (1962), Becker (1964), Glaser and Strass (1967), Blumer (1969) and Blumstein (1973), who argued that identities are maintained through the ongoing process of identity negotiation in social situations. In Stone's (1962) view, the appearance of an individual also establishes and maintains one's identity, in other words, by dressing a certain way, one enacts a particular identity to an audience and this identity changes

amongst social relationships. This ‘identity negotiation’ or ‘identity bargaining,’ as Blumstein (1973) argued, is a fundamental aspect of the individual’s broader task of defining the situation and constructing reality. From this perspective, meaning is viewed as an emerging, fluid and reciprocal phenomena by way of social interaction where the self is an inseparable cause and consequence of social interactions. This argument can be progressed further by positing that the process of identity construction includes not only the social, but the cultural world as a role-taking participant. Geertz (1973) offered the following insightful interpretation:

Culture provides the link between what men and women are intrinsically capable of becoming and what they actually, one by one, in fact become. Becoming human is becoming an individual, and we become individual under the guidance of cultural patterns, historically created systems of meaning in terms of which we give form, order, point and direction to our lives (Geertz, 1973: 58).

Relatedly, Epstein (1973) suggested that concepts of the self can be viewed as theory based, specifically, one that a person holds about herself or himself as a functioning, experiencing and interacting human being. Epstein (1973) conceptualised the self as a structure of various identities and attributes where self-evaluations develop out of the individual’s reflexive, social and symbolic activities. As Epstein articulated, ‘identity ... is essentially a concept of synthesis ... It represents the process by which the person seeks to integrate his or her various statuses and roles, as well as his or her diverse experiences into a coherent image of self’ (1973: 101).

In later research, Turner (1976), McCall and Simmons (1978) argued that the structure of the self is hierarchical consisting of individual role identities. Turner (1976) insisted that individuals are not reproductions of their societies because a person’s experience within a social structure

gives rise to a self-conception where symbolisation of the self runs through all of the individual's activities. As Turner (1976) conceived it, the individual is a collection of selves or identities with each surfacing at different social moments. In Turner's view (1976), individuals tend to merge with those roles by which important others identify them in order to maximise autonomy while concurrently developing greater self-esteem. Similarly, Schwartz (1987) argued that identity is emergent. As Schwartz put it:

How can a person's sense of identity be tenuous? Are not all people what they are? Is that not their identity? The answer is that, for the most part, people are not what they are, or what is the same thing, cannot permit themselves to be what they are ... We look outside ourselves to find out what we are supposed to be, if we are going to be anything at all, if we are going to have an identity. Thus, the locus of our identity shifts from who we are to who others will permit us to be (Schwartz, 1987: 120).

In this vein, literature by Serpe (1987), Stryker (1979; 1987; 1980; 2004), Stryker and Serpe (1982; 1994) analysed social structures and their influence on individual identity and behaviour. According to Stryker (1979, 1980; 2004), the salience of hierarchical identities is evident through behavioural commitment. In Stryker's (1980) view, the greater the individual has commitment to a particular identity, the more consequential it is for the individual to conduct behaviour in alignment with that identity. Burke and Tully (1977), Burke (1980), Burke and Reitzes (1981) argued that identity and behaviour are linked through a common system of meaning. From this perspective, self-meanings develop from the reactions of others. Over time, an individual will respond in the same way that others respond to the individual such that self-meanings become shared by all (Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979; Burke, 1991).

In later research, McCall (2003) focused on how identities are verified and maintained in face to face interaction. In McCall's (2003) view, individuals attempt to achieve identity-verification by enacting role performances that will keep their perceived identity meanings held in their identity standard. According to Burke and Stets, identity-verification often includes cooperative and mutually agreed-on arrangements of role performances, 'a coordinated effort that involves individuals modifying their role performance or altering their identity standard in order to accomplish identity-verification' and 'to facilitate the verification of the other's identity' (2009: 116). Burke and Stets argued, 'uniformity in thought and action' occurs while being a member of a group (2009: 118). According to Stets and Burke (2000), Burke and Stets (2009), the uniformity of social identity elicits a sense of belongingness and raises feelings of self-worth. Thus, feelings of self-worth rise when individuals participate in groups and feel accepted and valued on the basis of who they are (Stets & Burke, 2000; Hogg, 2001; Cast & Burke, 2002; Burke & Stets, 2009; Tajfel, 2010).

However, Cohen (2002) proposed a different view for examining the self by arguing that 'western social science proceeds from the top downwards,' in other words, 'from society to the individual, deriving individuals from the social structures to which they belong' notably, 'class, nationality, state, ethnic group, tribe, kinship group, gender, religion and caste, generation' (2002: 6). According to Cohen (2002), social scientists have concentrated their efforts on collective structures and categories, that, by and large, have taken the individual for granted resulting in fictitious representations. Cohen proposed that research should focus from 'the bottom upwards by recognising that the relationship of individual and society is far more complex and infinitely more variable than has been documented in academic literature' (2002: 6). As Cohen explained:

If we regard social groups as a collection of complex selves (complex, because any individual must be regarded as a cluster of selves or as a multi-dimensional self) we are clearly acknowledging that they are more complicated and require more subtle and sensitive description and explanation than if we treat them simply as a combination of roles ... They do not take into account the individual's capacity to reflect on his or her behaviour – that is, to be self-conscious. Nor do they address the meaning which the decision has for the individual, which may be significantly different from its perception by others. But a moments reflection will suggest numerous other possibilities ... In treating the self as socially constituted, social science has denied 'authorship' to the individual, seeing identity either as imposed by another, or as formulated by the individual in relation to another. Both views imply the insubstantial nature of selfhood (Cohen, 2002: 6).

As Cohen (2002) conceived it, social scientists should focus on understanding the individual and their relationship to society, using *their* words and *their* language. In other words, social scientists should seek to understand their subjects from their *point of view*.

In sum, this thesis aims to address the research limitations evident from the literature oversights highlighted in this review concerning the study of organisational culture, cultural control, identity and conceptions of the self from the perspective of employees. This thesis aims to address this research limitation and in doing so to contribute to organisational and management literatures through the investigation of a significant public sector organisation in NSW, notably, Service NSW and its 'DNA' culture during times of immense structural and global change.

Conclusion to Chapter Two

The conceptual and empirical literature outlined in this review is categorised under three distinct, yet diverse bodies of knowledge, notably, organisational culture, cultural control and the self. Important literature highlighted included Martin's (2001) three perspectives of organisational culture, Kunda's (2009) perspectives concerning normative control along with Goffman's (1963) presentations of self, including front stage and back stage performances. As these areas of scholarship are vast, the review examined those scholars who were of specific concern and relevance for the focus of this thesis. Those disciplinary schools of thought that were out of scope for this research were highlighted at the outset of each section.

The review of the relevant literatures has highlighted the limited extent to which NSW public service organisations have been investigated through ethnographic methods. To address this gap, this thesis applies an interpretative approach for the critical analysis of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture from the perspective of employees, in other words, from *their* point of view. The next chapter presents the interpretative conceptual framework for which to empirically analyse the ethnographic and qualitative data.

Chapter Three

An Interpretative Conceptual Framework for Analysing Organisational Culture, Normative Control and The Self

Introduction

This chapter proposes an interpretative conceptual framework for the analysis of organisational culture, normative control and the self. This conceptual framework is designed to empirically inform the case study in a way that fulfils what Cohen insisted is a critical requirement for those who research the consciousness of others by addressing questions of the self, ‘since not to do so is to risk misunderstanding and, therefore, misrepresenting the people who we claim to know and who we represent to others’ (2002: 4). The interpretative conceptual framework presented in this chapter brings together key building blocks from the three distinct bodies of knowledge covered in Chapter Two. In essence, the analytic framework is designed to address the following research questions:

1. What are the prominent characteristics of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture that affect every day work in the organisation, such as the organisation's values, norms, rules and rituals?
2. How have the machinery of government changes that were introduced in 2018-19 by the Department of Customer Service affected the characteristics of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture?
3. How were the changes experienced by Service NSW staff members when interacting at work?

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the assumptions informing different research paradigms by addressing philosophical issues that frame the ethnographic and qualitative research. The first section begins with an exploration of Kuhn's (1970) perspectives concerning the evolving nature of research paradigms. Moreover, competing research paradigms reflected in organisational culture studies are discussed at length. Specifically, Martin's (2001) three perspectives of organisational culture, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation views of culture are presented.

The second section of this chapter addresses the conceptual components of organisational subcultures in greater levels of detail, notably, the nature of enhancing, orthogonal and counter subcultures within organisations (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). This conceptual framework further extends Meyerson and Martin's (1987) conceptualisations by incorporating an additional concept to the analytic framework, notably, micro cultures which function within broader departmental or business unit subcultures. In line with the methods required to conduct subcultural analysis, this section introduces the scholarship on emic and etic approaches (Pike, 1967), however, a comprehensive review of the most significant arguments concerning both etic and emic concepts are reserved for the methods chapter of this thesis.

The third section of this chapter discusses other key conceptual building blocks including, ideology (Geertz, 1973), managerial ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992) and forms of normative control (Kunda, 2009). Moreover, to conduct a finer level ethnographic analysis that incorporates the observation of participant behaviour, the conceptual framework utilises Goffman's (1959) front stage and back stage concepts in combination with three of Van Maanen's (1979) sites of enactment, notably, scenes, encounters and relationships. This

comprehensive interpretative framework makes it possible to critically investigate a central concern of this thesis, notably, how the management of an organisation's culture affects employees from their *point of view* in times of significant change. Finally, this chapter explains the way the interpretative conceptual framework has been applied through the use of ethnographic and qualitative methods. The analysis of the empirical data using this framework are presented in Chapters Five through to Chapter Eleven of this thesis.

Evolving Paradigms

The term 'paradigm' describes the way a scientific breakthrough can provide an exemplary model for conducting research if affirmed and validated by the collective scientific community (Kuhn, 1970: 10). According to Kuhn, (1970) shared beliefs bring communities of researchers together seeking to achieve agreement regarding a fit between theory and empirical data. Kuhn (1970) claimed that only when new researchers enter a scientific field would paradigms change due to the observation of anomalies by new members who do not possess the full cognitive burden of sustained paradigm exposure and, therefore, are not restricted by conventional thinking patterns.

According to Kuhn 'when paradigms change, the world itself changes with them' (1970: 111). From Kuhn's (1970) perspective, collective thinking patterns of scientists are reflected in the paradigmatic shifts that take place. Firstly, scientists express through their research a dedication to normal science and to solving puzzles. Next, serious anomalies emerge, which Kuhn argued leads to some sort of crisis. Finally, a resolution emerges through what Kuhn termed 'incommensurability' (1970: xi), that is, the scientific expression of new ideas and assertions that cannot be strictly compared to outdated ones.

To illustrate by way of example, Burrell and Morgan (1979) explained paradigmatic shifts that took place in studies of organisational culture. Specifically, Burrell and Morgan (1979) presented a typology that demonstrated distinctions between four, sometimes overlapping paradigmatic perspectives and research approaches for the study of organisational culture. Their four paradigms include structural functionalism, radical structuralism, interpretivism and radical humanism which are constrained by two continuums: regulatory and radical, objectivist and subjectivist approaches, each presenting key distinctions in scientific method (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Each paradigm proposes an acceptance of certain political and epistemological assumptions (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

To extrapolate upon each of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigms, Parker (2000) argued that researchers who adopt a functionalist paradigm seek to discover data about organisations in order that an elite, typically managers, can better exercise control over their staff members. From this perspective, the meanings held in cultural assumptions are suggested to be what culture fundamentally *has* (Smircich, 1983). As mentioned in Chapter Two, organisational culture, from Smircich's (1983; 1985) perspective could be viewed as something an organisation *has* versus something an organisation *is*. This distinction moves the interpretation of an organisation's culture as social facts to an organisation's culture as ongoing social constructions (Smircich 1983; 1985). The implication from the functionalist stance is that cultural assumptions can be managed and controlled by managers and leaders. Functionalist approaches tend to be dominated by quantitative methodologies, the most commonly deployed measurement techniques being surveys that encompass a range of scales including Likert measures and other numerically based systems that provide, at best, very static pictures of cultural congruence within organisations (Smircich, 1985; Martin, 2001). Within the functionalist research paradigm, there is very little recognition of conflict or divergent cultural

perspectives. If conflicts do occur, they are considered pathological and are believed to have a 'negative impact on a perceivable homogenous culture based on a manipulable set of dominant values, shared beliefs and rules of behaviour' (Parker, 2000: 62-3).

According to Parker (2000), most functionalist research negates the possibility of observing and documenting resistance, conflict or contradiction in favour of an analysis toward the determination of consensus. In essence, functionalist research is designed to diagnose symptoms that undermine the potential for increased production and profitability. It could be argued that the functionalist approach is designed to assist and improve managerial control over the subjective experience of members (Parker, 2000). The desired end state is a consensus approach to a shared culture (Schein, 1990; 1991). A shared culture in this respect means prescribing values and behaviours which are to be internalised and accepted by all employees. The key agents who shape this normative ordering are typically senior managers, leaders or founders (Schein, 1983). This normative ordering manifests by way of social engineering, notably, through symbols and ceremonies (Dandridge, 1983; 1986; 1988), stories (Martin & Powers, 1983; Wilkins, 1983), rites and rituals (Trice & Beyer, 1985, 1993; Beyer, & Trice 1988) and reward systems (Sethia & Glinow, 1985). According to Parker:

A form of interpretative humanism or anthropological gloss is used as the bait to encourage the reader to swallow a managerialist intervention in shaping meanings. And of course, once internalised and commitment has been achieved, members will be more content, the organisation more profitable and decision making more democratic (Parker, 2000: 66).

According to Parker (2000) the functionalist paradigm largely ignores contested viewpoints in relation to the organisation's dominant culture and, therefore, negates any implications for staff members positioned lower in the corporate hierarchy in relation to the organisation's dominant culture (Parker, 2000). As Parker stated:

Though language and interpretation are often suggested to be important, the theories and descriptions of functionalist research provide very little opportunity for various understandings of potential conflicts, contradictions or confusions that encompass everyday organisational life (Parker, 2000: 67).

Relatedly, radical structuralism is the second research paradigm outlined in Burrell and Morgan's (1979) typology for the analysis of organisational culture. In epistemological terms, like the functionalist paradigm, radical structuralism is informed by the positivist assumption that organisations are entities and that culture within an organisation can be studied using appropriate, mostly quantitative scientific methods. Both paradigms also share the perspective that ideas and meanings are subordinate to commercial and economic imperatives. Parker (2000) argued that any resistance under a radical structuralist approach, 'is defused by or mediated through the effects of ideology and false consciousness ... if this paradigm is adopted the only likely understanding of organisational culture is as an effective tool of repression' (Parker, 2000: 69).

Before embarking upon a discussion concerning the final two paradigms, notably, interpretivism and radical humanism, it is important to return to Kuhn's (1970) argument concerning the issue of paradigm invisibility. According to Kuhn, scientists may be unaware of the subjective nature of their selected paradigm and believe they directly perceive the 'truth'

(Kuhn, 1970: 170). According to numerous critical scholars of organisational culture, those who subscribe to functionalist and radical structuralist paradigms make such assumptions (Smircich, 1983, 1985; Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Martin, 2001; Kunda, 2013). An important shift away from this orientation has been provided by scholars who subscribe to interpretivist and radical humanist approaches, in other words, scholars who have made worthwhile contributions particularly in relation to the nature of hegemony in social structures, such as, in the workplace. As Kuhn articulated:

At times of revolution, when the normal-scientific tradition changes, the scientist's perception of his environment must be re-educated in some familiar situations one must learn to see a new gestalt. After one has done so, the world of his research will seem, here and there, incommensurable with the one inhabited before ... By focusing attention upon a small range of relatively esoteric problems, the paradigm forces scientists to investigate some part of nature in detail and depth that would otherwise be unimaginable (Kuhn, 1970: 25-112).

Smircich's (1983; 1985) contributions represent one such paradigmatic shift in organisational culture research. Where the functionalist and radical structuralist paradigms negate the importance of cultural meaning, interpretivism emphasises the local nature of cultural processes and deducts the subject of enquiry to actor level phenomenon, in other words, cultural analysis in search for meaning (Parker, 2000). Interpretivism includes the collective study of artefacts (Schein, 1991), organisational symbols (Martin & Powers, 1983; Wilkins, 1983) and languages and rituals (Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Bate, 1994). Interpretivists examine organisational artefacts (Schein, 1991) including architecture, furniture, tradition, meetings, images, events and clothing, that is, conventionally neglected topics in order to attempt to 'decode' the systems

of meaning that typically pass thresholds of consciousness (Parker, 2000: 70). The analysis of participant language is central since an organisation's culture manifests in and through its use of language (Parker, 2000). From this perspective, slang, jargon, acronym and technicality become exemplifiers of cultural processes 'because they are illustrative of the kinds of communities that organisations inhabit' (Parker, 2000: 70). In essence, the interpretivist paradigm clearly distinguishes itself from functionalism and radical structuralism by its methods. For interpretivists, ethnographic inquiry, otherwise known as participant observation, in combination with the qualitative analysis of texts, are common approaches taken for the study of organisational cultures and subcultures (Smircich, 1983; Martin & Siehl, 1983). Most importantly, the use of questionnaires and surveys are treated with suspicion (Parker, 2000).

Interpretivists may focus exclusively on ethnographic descriptions of practice or text and place less emphasis on decoding underlying structures (Parker, 2000). Interpretivists may also attempt to uncover the deeper cognitive or semiotic structures in organisational practices by uncovering underlying assumptions. Interpretivism emphasises the reading of the organisational text to decode its underlying 'binary structures of meaning as codes that inform and explain organisational practice' (Parker, 2000: 71). Binary structures, however, can be rather opaque. Parker (2000) therefore noted that subjectivists take ethnographic inquiry a step further by attempting to deconstruct the coherence of any conception of culture by a continual dialectic between the explicit and implicit. Subjectivism, then, requires a strong reflexive stance by the social scientist (Turner, 1988; Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg & Martin, 1991; Jones, 1996). Nonetheless, despite interpretivism's concern with detail, criticisms concerning its method emerged from the outset. As Parker argued, 'the problem ... with the interpretivist paradigm is that there is an implicit assumption that social order is constructed locally and consensually

and there are not wider conflicts over the definition of symbols themselves' (Parker, 2000: 74).

Kuhn offered a perspective as to why this research problem manifests in the first place:

If two people stand at the same place and gaze in the same direction, we must, under pain of solipsism, conclude that they receive closely similar stimuli. But people do not see stimuli; instead they have sensations and we are under no compulsion to suppose that the sensations of our two viewers are the same (Kuhn, 1970: 191).

While one preferred research paradigm may be easier to apply over others, if a social scientist looks hard enough, other cultural manifestations and interpretations will become visible. As Martin argued, 'hidden perspectives that are not dominant or easy to see at one point may later become home perspectives' (2001: 152). In other words, social scientists might change their chosen research paradigm in light of new insights. Critics of interpretivism claimed that an inadequate amount of depth, agency and sophistication, particularly in relation to mechanisms of power, control and meaning were presented in academic literatures (Parker, 2000). Such perceived inadequacies for the study of meaning resulted in the emergence of a fourth paradigm, radical humanism. According to Parker, 'the value of radical humanism is its twin stress on power and meaning' (2000: 75). From this perspective, certain groups have more power to enforce 'their understandings than others, although this does not promise their acceptance because subordinated groups also have the power to resist' (Parker, 2000: 75).

The radical humanist paradigm conceptualises organisational culture as a contested relation between meanings with distinctive understandings of a particular social group which may be in conflict with other social groups. The term subculture (Martin & Siehl, 1983) is particularly relevant because it recognises that ideas within a social group are not homogenous, in fact, they

are plural and often contested (Van Maanen & Barley, 1985). From the radical humanist perspective, 'an organisation's culture could be viewed as a struggle for hegemony with competing factions attempting to define the primary purpose of the organisation in a way that meets their perceived definitions' (Parker, 2000: 75). From the radical humanist's view, the topic of organisational culture raises both political and epistemological concern. Political because culture can be used by managerial elites as a form of normative control (Kunda, 2009). Epistemological because, as Smircich (1985) asserted, organisational culture is meaningful because it represents what organisations are. In this vein, organisational culture is formulated as institutionalising forms of legitimate power that support the status quo. In this view, the radical humanist approach is valuable, not only because it makes it possible to consider the various subcultures within an organisation, but also, because it focuses on revealing cultural ambiguities by discovering inconsistencies of 'meaning' reflected in individual perspectives of culture within organisations. As Dahler-Larsen posited, 'corporate culture's insensitivity to alternate voices may therefore actually be detrimental to corporate culture itself leading to cultural fragmentation because reservations, reflections and contrasting opinions in organisations do exist' (1994: 11). This view was echoed by Parker who argued 'radical humanism's critical perspective enables the normally silenced voices to speak and hence dethrone the dominant technocratic rationality of business organisations' (2000: 76). This critical analysis applies Burrell and Morgan's (1979) interpretivist and radical humanist paradigms and, therefore, considers both meaning and power within an organisation's culture and its various subcultures. The combination of these two paradigms provides the foundation to incorporate the remaining components for this conceptual framework.

Organisational Subcultures

As outlined in Chapter Two, Martin (2001) conceptually defined three views of cultures in organisations, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation perspectives. The integration perspective focuses on those manifestations of a culture that represent mutually consistent interpretations (Martin, 2001). An integrationist portrait of culture reflects consensus (Schein, 1990;1991) as existing throughout the occupational community by excluding the possibility of ambiguity. By contrast, the differentiation perspective focuses on cultural manifestations that have inconsistent interpretations (Martin, 2001). In this regard, consensus may exist in and between subcultures where subcultures may exist independently or in conflict with each other (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Martin, 2001). As mentioned in Chapter Two, studies that adopt a differentiation perspective generally seek out subcultural differences where ‘dissenting voices are not silenced or ignored’ (Martin 2001: 102). Accordingly, Martin (2001) explained that subcultures can enhance one another, in other words, subcultures can be mutually reinforcing (Van Maanen, 1991), or exist in conflict (Barley, 1986), or remain independent (Louis, 1985). Subcultures may be bound by occupational lines, including managerial, professional and ‘proceed along functional or vertical lines, or, on the basis of networks of personal contacts based on work, friendship or demographic identities such as race, ethnicity or gender’ (Martin, 2001: 103). Subcultures may have rigid boundaries or blurred boundaries. Staff members may even deliberately blur boundaries (Kondo, 1990; Kunda, 2009) for personal gain (Martin, 2001). This thesis concurs with Martin and Siehl’s (1983) subcultural distinctions and proposes an additional characterisation. In this regard, this conceptual framework includes the identification and analysis of micro cultures that function within broader organisational subcultures. Where organisational subcultures can function along broader departmental divisions and business units, micro counters would function within these divisions or business units. As a result, micro cultures would enact specific rules and values

for operating within the organisation. In addition, micro cultures would be bound by occupational lines where strong affiliations have formed, particularly with members who hold similar power or importance within an organisation's subculture. A micro culture would be identifiable through communication nuances between its members within a broader organisational subculture.

As mentioned, the differentiation perspective offers the possibility of subcultural conflict, a point that is conceptually crucial because it permits a fuller exploration of the workings of power (Mumby, 1987, 1988; Alvesson, 1996; Clegg & Hardy, 1996). Conflicting subcultures represent a prototypical counter subculture (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). As Martin and Siehl (1983) explained, a counter subculture is one that espouses a rather tense symbiotic relationship with the dominant culture because some core values may present a direct challenge to the values of the organisation.

Martin's (2001) fragmentation perspective diverges again by conceptualising the relationship among cultural manifestations as neither clearly consistent nor inconsistent. Instead, interpretations of cultural manifestations are ambiguously related to each other (Martin, 2001). From the fragmentation perspective, cultural consensus is transient and issue specific (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Martin, 2001). These three perspectives of organisational culture are complemented by one another as each takes an alternate view on three dimensions in relation to cultural manifestations (Martin, 2001).

This critical analysis includes all three of Martin's (2001) cultural perspectives as fundamental building blocks for the interpretative conceptual framework. Martin's (2001) three perspectives acknowledge that cultures and subcultures in organisations can encompass competing values.

As mentioned, the complexities involved in the analysis of cultures and subcultures in organisations are important considerations for social scientists. The prominent debates and critiques concerning methodological sensitivities for the study of organisational cultures are reserved for the methods chapter of this thesis, however, in order to foreshadow the logic that underpins the development of this conceptual framework and to adequately structure the methodological approach that follows in the next chapter, a brief introduction to etic and emic concepts for the study of culture is presented.

This thesis supports the view that etic concepts exist in the language of theory. Methodologically, etic concepts manifest by way of examining culture as an outsider, not limited to the application of questionnaires and or Likert scales which search for universalism by delivering distinct accounts, descriptions and categories driven by way of conventional analysis (Van Maanen, 2011). Ethnography, too, adopts etic concepts by interpreting the key findings, that is, by analysing, emic concepts. Emic concepts are found in the language of the field, in other words, the interpretation of participant language. Methodologically, emic concepts are analysed by studying culture as an insider, incorporating symbolism to make sense of constructed realities through extended immersion and close observation of participants. To reiterate, this thesis applies etic concepts in order to emically interpret the meaning of language that is used by staff members in the chosen organisation, Service NSW. Several etic concepts are fused together in this study including, ideology (Geertz, 1973), managerial ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992), normative control (Kunda, 2009), presentation ritual (Kunda, 2009), presentations of self (Goffman, 1959) and various sites of enactment (Van Maanen, 1979).

Ideology, Normative Control and The Self

The scholarship on cultural control reviewed in the previous chapter referred to forms of cultural control exercised to obtain cultural consensus and direct employee behaviour (Kunda, 2009). In this vein, agents of normative control are those with organisational power who get their employees 'to do that which they would not otherwise do' and thereby reduce cultural tension (Ailon, 2006: 776). One way that agents use normative control is by intentionally eliciting employee behaviour 'that the organisation finds rewarding' while concurrently decreasing the use of traditional methods of control, for instance, by decreasing the use of 'surveillance, punishments and sanctions' (Kunda, 2009: 10). Kunda (2009) illustrated that normative control manifests, first, as an outcome of an imposing system of meaning, in other words, normative control commences with an ideology. According to Geertz:

Ideology is an authoritative system of meaning where 'schematic images of social order' publicly proposed by those who claim authority whether politically, aesthetically, morally or economically endow maps of problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective consciousness (Geertz, 1973: 220).

In the organisational setting, Barley and Kunda proposed that managerial ideology is 'a stream of discourse that promulgates, however unwittingly, a set of assumptions about the nature of ... corporations, employees, managers and the means by which the latter can direct the other two' (Barley & Kunda, 1992: 200). From this perspective, the promulgation or enactment of managerial ideology by agents of normative control can direct employee behaviour through the management of an organisation's culture. Barley and Kunda (1992) argued with the emergence of normative rhetoric, the term 'culture' was frequently used as a description of the company and a rationale for people's behaviour. Kunda and Ailon-Souday (2009) claimed that

managerial ideologies represent the organisation as one which espouses unifying values and moral involvement in an effort to manage and, therefore, shape workers identities, emotions, attitudes and beliefs through culture. As Kunda also stated, culture is used as ‘a guide for action, a cause for praise and condemnation, pride and despair’ (2009: 10). However, the emic approach also revealed that culture is many different things to different employees depending on their position within the organisation and their prescribed roles including ‘explicit, detailed, wide-ranging and systematically enforced prescriptions for what members in good standing are to think and feel about themselves’ (Kunda, 2009: 161).

Accordingly, the concept of organisational membership (Kunda, 2009) is a significant building block for the interpretative framework adopted for this thesis. For this purpose, organisational membership groups encompass all business units and divisions which are viewed as being bounded by degrees of perceived organisational use value where membership groups fall on a spectrum in terms of their subjection to full or partial ideological formulations by agents of normative control. This interpretative framework analyses ideological formulations emitted by agents of normative control toward the organisation’s various membership groups by examining its dominant culture and its various subcultures.

Moreover, according to Kunda (2009), one strong form of normative control is the use of presentation ritual. This concept is adopted as part of the interpretative framework to show how agents and subjects of normative control display behavioural rules that form part of their membership group within the organisation. Presentation rituals, it is argued, function as a conduit between ideologies and the subjective experience of participants by creating a basis for a shared definition of the organisation’s social reality within which employees are expected to express and confirm through their behaviour (Kunda, 2009). As Kunda explained, ‘rituals may

determine the manner in which social reality is perceived, interpreted and understood' (Kunda, 2009: 93). Moreover, as Turner (1969; 1974) pointed out, rituals portray emotional significance. Indeed, presentation ritual may be seen as a strong mechanism of normative control (Etzioni, 1961; Kunda, 2009).

In organisational settings, presentation rituals offer 'managers a mode of exercising or at least, seeking to exercise power along the cognitive and affective planes' (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989: 49). According to Kunda, presentation rituals within organisational settings are:

mechanisms through which certain organisational members influence how other members are to think and feel what they want, what they fear, what they should regard as proper and possible and ultimately, perhaps, who they are ... Conventional managerial wisdom has it that extensive and recurring participation in ritual gatherings where the organisation's ideology is enacted causes members to 'internalise' the culture and infuses them with the 'right mindset' and the appropriate 'gut reactions.' In short, presentation rituals are a mechanism for transforming abstract formulations of the organisation's ideology into the lived experience of members (Kunda, 2009: 93-4).

This interpretative framework applies presentation ritual (Kunda, 2009) and accepts the position that presentation rituals may result in a loss of transforming power and an inability to convey very little, if any, meaning (Goody, 1977) and, that 'meaning of ritual is always context-dependent where ritual performances are always a matter for empirical analysis and interpretation (Kunda, 2009). Indeed, the words and actions that both agents and subjects of normative control (Kunda, 2009) display in ritual gatherings manifesting through the organisation's dominant culture (Martin, 2001) and its various subcultures (Martin & Siehl,

1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987) is one central concern for this thesis. Accordingly, this thesis seeks to identify, describe and interpret the organisation's culture and subcultures, the various membership groups, forms of normative control and subsequent performance displays that staff members make when performing their work. To do this, the thesis applies Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical configurations of the self on the front stage by observing organisational members during various performance ritual. In addition, to identify instances where dramatical performances are less self-conscious, this thesis applies Goffman's (1959) back stage concept. These concepts are used as part of the ethnographic observation and interpretation of the language and behaviours of those who work in a variety of organisational settings and in various organisational membership groups.

According to Goffman's (1959) front stage concept, performances reflect members behaving in accordance to cultural and social standards. By contrast, the back stage is where members represent themselves less self-consciously and where one is better able to psychologically relax and reduce the degree of impression management (Goffman, 1959). In this regard, the interpretative conceptual framework thoughtfully adopts Van Maanen's perspective in relation to the self:

The self is both an integration and an abstraction of the views we think others hold toward us. As we progress through adulthood, these categories of the self must handle increasing amounts of information coming from others about 'who we are.' Significantly, the information is typically varied and sometimes conflicting since people will respond to us differently in different situations ... Thus, not only do we come to see ourselves as we believe others do, we must also manage our behaviour in such a way that people will come to see us in that light (Van Maanen, 1979: 48-9).

Indeed, Trilling (1972) offers a reflection concerning the cognitions and emotions of those who live in such a state. As Trilling explained:

The individual who lives in this new circumstance is subject to the constant influence, the literal in-flowing, of the mental processes of others, which, in the degree that they stimulate or enlarge his consciousness, make it less his own. She or he finds it ever more difficult to know what is her or his own self is and what being true to it consists of (Trilling, 1972: 61-2).

In addition to the concepts outlined above, the thesis utilises several concepts outlined by Van Maanen including ‘scenes,’ ‘encounters’ and ‘relationships’ (1979: 65). This thesis adopts ‘scenes’ which are ‘those situations individuals seek out and participate in primarily for immediate gratification’ (Van Maanen, 1979: 68). In scenes, ‘individuals aim to select situations where they believe there will be ‘others present who will behave well towards them’ (Van Maanen, 1979: 69). ‘Encounters’ will be ethnographically analysed as they signify ‘the most tightly arranged social situations because proper conduct has been largely institutionalised’ (Van Maanen, 1979: 69). Finally, ‘relationships’ are analysed with respect to ‘work associations, friendships and other long-term affiliations where common vocabularies develop, similar background expectancies emerge and the events significant to one’s sense of place in the world are interpreted’ (Van Maanen, 1979: 70). The analysis of ‘relationships’ is adopted as part of this interpretative framework because ‘much self-lodging occurs and, therefore, impression management is observed to be the “least self-conscious”’ (Van Maanen, 1979: 70). By applying Van Maanen’s (1979) concepts, in conjunction with in depth interviews, as organisational members move from scene to scene, encounter to encounter, or relationship to relationship, changes in self displays may be observed and interpreted.

At this point, it is necessary to review the components of this interpretative conceptual framework and how the components are fused together for empirical application. This doctoral research is grounded in both interpretivism and radical humanism (Parker, 2000) traditions within organisational culture studies. In other words, research practices that deliberately seek to firstly, descriptively document organisational cultures and secondly, decode the meaning of power and control in its local context from the perspective of organisational members. Attention is then given to documenting the organisation's ideology (Geertz, 1973; Barely & Kunda, 1992) and interpreting the organisation's most influential sources of authority, specifically, the organisation's agents and subjects of normative control (Kunda, 2009). In this regard, this thesis presents the management of the organisation's prescribed 'culture' by agents of normative control (Kunda, 2009) and how agents of normative control ensured their subjects did 'that which they would not otherwise do' (Ailon, 2006: 776). To examine the organisation's culture and subcultures in some depth, a few conceptual distinctions were required including the assessment of deeper assumptions (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Martin, 2001). Such phenomena incorporated in the analysis included organisational artefacts, notably, values, jargon, stories, rituals, dress and décor as well as management practices by way of organisational tasks such as training, performance appraisals, allocation of rewards and sanctions and hiring practices. In order to identify displays enacted by the organisation's various agents and subjects of normative control, this thesis carefully described and analysed the organisation's performance rituals. Performance rituals included those events that agents and subjects of normative control routinely participated in. Events such as scenes, encounters and relationships (Van Maanen, 1979) included both formal and informal structured face to face gatherings consisting of interviews, presentations, meetings, lectures, training and workshops. In other words, displays that were made by agents and subjects of normative control on the front stage and back stage (Goffman, 1959). These displays were documented to describe and interpret the organisation's

‘schematic images of social order’ (Geertz, 1973: 220) in order to reflect the organisation’s dominant culture and its various subcultures by applying Martin’s (2001) three perspectives of organisational culture, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation. Indeed, clear distinctions were made between the organisation’s dominant culture, its various subcultures that coexisted with it, notably, enhancing, orthogonal or counter subcultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987) and micro cultures.

Conclusion to Chapter Three

This chapter presents an interpretative framework by fusing together key concepts that were applied to analyse the empirical data and, therefore, answer the research questions. This interpretative framework provides the conceptual building blocks to enable the examination and analysis of the nexus between the chosen organisation’s managerial ideology (Geertz, 1973; Barely & Kunda 1992), forms of normative control (Kunda, 2009), the management of the organisation’s prescribed culture (Martin, 2001), its various subcultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Martin, 2001), its micro cultures and various presentation rituals (Kunda, 2009), including front stage and back stage (Goffman, 1959) performances across Van Maanen’s (1979) various sites of enactment in order to analyse the emic perspective of employees. The next chapter discusses the methodological requirements for this empirical analysis.

Chapter Four

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides a thorough review of the ethnographic and qualitative methods adopted for this doctoral research. The first section provides a broad overview of the ethnographic method and includes a discussion of its epistemic and ontological strengths and weaknesses by contrasting ethnography with experimental research designs. The second section presents a comprehensive outline of the approach adopted for the study's ethnographic data collection and analysis following Van Maanen's (2011) methodological staging components, which is comprised of three parts, notably, *Preparing for the Field*, *In the Field* and *The Write Up*.

The first methodological stage, *Preparing for the Field*, outlines all field work preparations including the selection of Service NSW as the organisation of research and the field site, the McKell Building, Haymarket Sydney. This section also details important ethical considerations as well as sensitivities concerning participant confidentiality and anonymity. The second methodological stage, *In the field*, details the approach taken to record key organisational activities in the field, including field observations, participant observations and semi-structured audio recorded interviews. In addition, this section includes the approach taken to analyse auxiliary sources of data collected during field work, including Service NSW annual reports, grey literature and information sources available on the Service NSW intranet and website as well as the analysis of other important NSW government websites that provide important contextual information. The third methodological component, *The Write Up*, outlines the approach taken to prepare both the fieldnotes and the participant interview data, notably, the process of data interpretation and coding for theme development as well as a realist account

made on behalf of the researcher that represents these findings. Finally, a summary of the chapter reiterates the ethnographic and qualitative method design, data collection and analysis requirements for this research. To begin this discussion, a review concerning ethnography's foundations along with a broad comparison of ethnography to experimental science is provided.

Reflections on the Ethnographic Method

Debates and critiques concerning ethnography's scientific legitimacy surfaced during the mid to late twentieth century. However, its intellectual lineage can be traced back to the time of Francis Bacon with the development of modern science, specifically, the emergence of inductive and deductive methods to knowledge production. Inductive logic is a procedure of inference from the enumeration of experience; in other words, successive observations that lead to a statement of a general principle (Lindlof, 2008). By contrast, deductive logic is a system of logic based on a formulised argument consisting of propositions leading inexorably to a conclusion (Lindlof, 2008). The deductive approach aims to empirically test a theory whereas the inductive approach is centrally concerned with the generation of new theories that emerge from data.

This rather dichotomous relationship between interpretative understanding and causal explanation has been well documented. To explicate, the *Verstehen-Erklären* debate originated during the rise of positivist social science during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to positivists, 'human nature is little different from physical nature' (Lindlof, 2008: 3). In the positivist view, human nature can be explained by experimental science, specifically by 'reducing the action of human beings to a limited number of purely physiological functions' (Lindlof, 2008: 3). In other words, it was claimed that human nature could be examined by measuring stimulus, response and drive (Watson, 1924; Skinner, 1938).

Moreover, by analysing these functions in relation to changes of cause and effect, scientific experiment would lead to static generalisations about the human condition (Lindlof, 2008). Geertz responded by stating that ‘the question still remains whether such universals should be taken as the central elements in the definition of man, whether a lowest common denominator view of humanity is what we want anyway’ (1973: 48).

Like Geertz (1973), other scholars vehemently disagreed with the experimental approach for the study of human nature. Dilthey (1914; 1974) proposed that ‘human sciences’ were of a different sort compared to the natural sciences. From this perspective, Dilthey (1914) argued that Erklären’s nomological-deductive experimental methodology could be applied to test hypothesis on the subject of human behaviour, however this method concurrently omits the meanings and intentions of the subject of human behaviour (Lindlof, 2008). Lindlof explained Dilthey’s (1914) position by stating that humans ‘express themselves in complex ways precisely because they ascribe meaning to things’ (2008: 4). By contrast, the method proposed by Verstehen, ‘is closely aligned with that of hermeneutics,’ in which ‘the meaning of one text is grasped tentatively by relating it to an array of related texts’ (Lindlof, 2008: 4). Nonetheless, Verstehen was criticised from the outset (Abel, 1948; Nagal, 1961) by those who claimed that ‘without going the additional steps to engage in controlled observation and verification of behaviour, Verstehen could only offer “hunches” about the possible meanings of someone’s experience’ (Lindlof, 2008: 6). In spite of such criticisms, ‘the Verstehen view of human action’ gained support from scholars working in the fields of ‘sociology, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and social constructivism’ (Lindlof, 2008: 8). This thesis follows Verstehen and the scholarship that arose from his work in the growing disciplines of anthropology and sociology.

The Chicago School of Urban Ethnography was the first central learning hub for those taking up the challenge of anthropological field work (Hughes, 1937; 1945) whose ethnographical methods involved prolonged periods of immersion in the field, otherwise known as an extended sojourn. By contrast, the method of participant observation originated in the field of sociology associated with Britain's social reform movement (Van Maanen, 2011). In the mid-twentieth century, anthropology and sociology became institutionally intermingled giving rise to what is now commonly known as ethnography (anthropology, the study of foreign cultures) and, participant-observation (sociology, the study of society).

Since the middle of the twentieth century, however, field work methods have developed through a series of stages (Freilich, 1970) for producing data, notably, 'rubber-data,' 'holy-data' and 'field work-as-science-data' (Nash, Wintrob & Bernard et al., 1972: 534-35). The 'rubber-data' stage involved the collection of 'vague, general, value-laden and often false' data by lay people and missionary clerics during the early to mid-twentieth century (Nash, Wintrob & Bernard et al., 1972: 534). Good examples include monographs by Radcliffe-Brown (1958) and Malinowski (1922; 1935). These founding fathers of cultural anthropology created an exciting intellectual climate that paved the way to what Freilich (1970) called the 'holy data stage' of field work (Nash, Wintrob & Bernard et al., 1972: 535). The holy-data stage demanded total involvement, sacrifice and dedication by field workers where worthwhile data was collected, it seemed, rather mysteriously (Freilich, 1970). In this regard, few questions were asked about the applied field work methods (Nash, Wintrob & Bernard et al, 1972). The holy data stage was considered a particularly problematic era for anthropological field workers who suffered many criticisms (Freilich, 1970). In an effort to counter criticisms and increase the scientific legitimacy of the ethnographic method, the third stage, 'field work-as-science' received 'support from the high prestige of "science" and the availability of large research grants for those who could play

the scientific game' (Nash, Wintrob & Bernard et al., 1972: 535). Hence, during the 'field work-as-science' stage, ethnography was legitimated as a science. As LeCompte & Goetz stated, ethnography is a science that attempts to decree:

systematically the characteristics of variables and phenomena, to generate and refine conceptual categories, to discover and validate associations among phenomena, or to compare constructs and postulates generated phenomena in one setting with comparable phenomena in another setting (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 33).

While sceptics of the ethnographic method compare its legitimacy to experimental science, both methods, in fact, play an important role in the development of scientific discourse (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). To elucidate, 'experimental researchers hope to find data to match a theory whereas ethnographers hope to find a theory that explains their data' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 33-4). In this way, ethnographers traditionally apply grounded theory to conduct their field work. Whilst this critical analysis incorporates ethnographic methods, it does not apply grounded theory. Rather, as outlined in Chapter Two, an interpretative conceptual framework has been developed and applied utilising ethnographic methods. Accordingly, this case study begins with a specific set of questions and general areas of enquiry that gradually allows for the development of thematic analysis.

During the 'field work-as-science' stage, Van Maanen (2011) argued that the methodological crux of anthropology's ethnography morphed into an interpretative rather than a descriptive approach to field work. From this perspective, anthropology sought to decode the meaning of culture from the perspective of participants, by and large, through the interpretation of symbols, 'language, art, myth, ritual,' or anything used to 'impose meaning upon experience'

(Geertz, 1973: 54). In this view, Van Maanen (2011) argued that cultural systems of meaning manifest into humanistic discourse through distinctive genres. Accordingly, this ethnographic case study applied Van Maanen's 'realist' genre of anthropological field writing (2011: 46). As Van Maanen explained, 'only what members of the studied culture say and do and, presumably, think is in the text' (2011: 50).

As mentioned in Chapters Two and Three, the complexities concerning the analysis of cultures, subcultures and employees in the workplace raise important methodological considerations for ethnographers. In this vein, this doctoral research has carefully selected its methodology to adequately provide worthwhile contributions that expand and advance knowledge in the fields of organisation and management studies. In this regard, this thesis provides clear distinctions between etic and emic concepts (Pike, 1967) in the course of ethnographic field work.

Etic concepts are drawn from the *language of theory*. Methodologically, etic approaches centre on the examination of a culture or cultures by an outsider. Other terms to describe the etic concept include *experience far* or *second order* (Van Maanen, 1979). According to Van Maanen, 'second-order concepts' are 'notions used by the field worker to explain the patterning of the first-order data,' therefore, 'second-order concepts' represent, what could be called 'interpretations of interpretations' (1979: 541). Typically, second order interpretations are made at a higher level of abstraction. Ethnography, too, applies etic concepts, however it does so by first analysing meaningful emic interpretations by understanding the language used by participants while in the field. As the emic perspective focuses on the *language of the field*, it involves the description and interpretation of informant language in search for underlying meanings. Methodologically, an emic approach involves the study of a culture or cultures as an *insider*, a process that incorporates symbolism to make sense of constructed realities through close observation of

participants. Other terms to describe the emic concept include *first order* or *experience near* (Van Maanen, 1979). According to Van Maanen (1979), first-order concepts are the ‘facts’ of an ethnographic investigation. Facts, as Van Maanen (1979) argued, come in a variety of forms including descriptive properties of the studied scene. Such facts require the field worker to deal with first level issues, ‘namely: the situationally, historically, and biographically mediated interpretations used by members of the organisation to account for a given descriptive property’ (Van Maanen, 1979: 540). However, according to Geertz, all forms of ethnographic writings are themselves interpretations, which he described as ‘second and third order’ (1973: 17). The study of culture, Geertz (1973) argued, is centrally concerned with the interpretation of ‘symbolic acts or clusters of symbolic acts’ to advance social discourse (1973: 29). This is of central importance to this doctoral research, which applies an interpretative conceptual framework to analyse the empirical etic and emic data, regardless of first or second ordering. In doing so, this thesis seeks to dissolve ‘the disjuncture between the observer and the observed’ replacing the ambivalence of distance and familiarity ‘by one of dialogue, representing a co-operative and a collaborative nature’ between researcher and participants (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998: 256). Hence, the emic perspective, specifically, the management of ‘breakdowns’ (Hirsch, 1976) are of immense importance in the course of this ethnographic enquiry.

Ethnographers consider ‘breakdowns’ during field work as atypical occurrences that require them to pay attention, both descriptively and interpretively, to the unexpected. According to Hirsch (1976), ‘a breakdown is the lack of fit between one’s encounter with a tradition and the schema-guided expectations by which one organises experiences’ (Agar, 1986: 21). To address breakdowns, a resolution is needed through the generation of good questions until the breakdown is resolved. According to Shultz, what follows next is ‘coherence’ a process in which

the ethnographer works to ‘reduce the other’s act to its typical motive, including their reference to typical situations, typical ends, typical means’ (1970: 180). In short, breakdowns, resolutions and coherences are critical components of the interpretation of emic data and valuable for revealing the meanings of organisational life through the analysis of informant language (Agar, 1986).

Taking into account the discussion above concerning both etic and emic concepts and their empirical applicability for this doctoral research, it is now important to address concepts of validity and reliability as they apply to ethnographic research. Whilst the ‘conventional methodological criteria’ for ‘quantitative research,’ that is, validity, reliability and empirical generalisability are considered not applicable for ethnographic research, it is argued that terms such as ‘rigour’, ‘credibility’ and ‘relevance’ are applicable (Chan, 2013: 504). Rigour is described as ‘thoroughness’ and the ‘appropriateness’ of the research methods being used (Chan, 2013: 504). ‘Credibility,’ relates to meaningful, well presented findings and ‘relevance’ reflects the utility of findings which are used to judge the quality or ‘trustworthiness’ of a study (Chan, 2013: 504). This doctoral research seeks to present a rigorous, credible and relevant ethnographic case study by utilising a specific set of methodological criteria and by emphasising the applied methodological techniques used to analyse and present both valid and reliable data for the academic community.

According to LeCompte and Goetz (1982), reliability in ethnographic studies is dependent upon the resolution of research design issues. In this regard, reliability is concerned with the replicability of scientific findings and is divided into two categories, notably, external and internal reliability (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). External reliability refers to ‘whether independent researchers would discover the same phenomenon or generate the same constructs

in the same or similar settings' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 32). However, social situations cannot precisely reconstruct the research methods or produce identical ethnographic results. In any case, ethnographers generally accept the notion, to enhance the external reliability of their data, recognition of the researcher's position as well as their selection of participants in specific social situations and conditions may have methodological implications (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). To elaborate further, 'because ethnographic data depends on the social relationship between the researcher and their subjects, research reports must clearly identify the researcher's role and status within the group investigated' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 38). From this perspective, 'external reliability requires both careful delineation of the types of people who serve as informants and the decision process involved in their choice as well as the social situations and conditions both researcher and participant find themselves in' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 38).

Participant selection should depend upon factors that include both 'accessibility' and 'willingness' as well as knowledge, insight and skill in understanding ethnographic queries (Davies, 2008: 89). In addition, some participants may reveal information in some contexts and circumstances and not in others. In other words, what informants say and do varies according to who is present and involved in the research (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). To manage external reliability, field workers can continuously cross-check information they obtain and the interpretations they develop, 'by returning to the same topic, asking the same question, under varying circumstances and checking verbal assertions with observations' (Davies, 2008: 97). In addition, ethnographers ensure external validity by coding categories of data, that is, by organising the naturally occurring stream of language into manageable units. This process allows units of analysis to be clearly identified and where units of analysis begin and end. The

process of coding data drastically reduces the dangers of idiosyncrasy and lack of comparability (LeCompte, 1982; LeCompte & Goetz, 1987).

Internal reliability ‘relates to the degree to which other researchers given a set of previously generated constructs would match them with data in the same way as did the original researcher’ (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 32). Here, significant arguments prevail specifically in relation to both temporal and spatial dimensions of ethnographic studies. Some scholars believe ethnographies cannot be considered internally reliable, because time is not a static phenomenon and spatial dimensions change over time, hence, generated constructs would likely change too (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). In addition, a debate of a different sort yet equally problematic relates to the concept of ‘naïve empiricism’ (Nash, Wintrob & Bernard et al., 1972). According to these scholars, naïve empiricism relates to the ethnographer’s degree of self-consciousness during the course of field work, a transformative process which may restrict the replication of any ethnographic study. Therefore, ‘crucial to internal reliability is interrater or interobserver reliability, the extent to which the sets of meanings held by multiple observers are sufficiently congruent so that they describe phenomena in the same way’ (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 34). To manage the complexities relating to internal reliability, ethnographers have developed several techniques including the application of low-inference descriptors, multiple researchers, participant researchers, peer examination and the use of mechanically recoded data (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Briefly, according to LeCompte and Goetz (1982), low-inference descriptors refer to verbatim accounts of what participants say as well as narratives of behaviour and activity. In addition, interpretative comments may be added, deleted or modified, however it is imperative to record precisely who did what and under what circumstances (Wax, 1971; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

In this regard, Van Maanen (2011) referred to the concept of thick description (Ryle, 1949; Geertz, 1973). Thick description is prose that reflects highly descriptive accounts of informants generated in the field. Geertz described 'thick description' as the accurate recording of 'microscopic' and 'fine-combed' details of informants and their environment (1973: 26). According to Geertz (1973), thick description is the semiotic or hermeneutic approach to ethnographic data collection and analysis which stresses an interpretative approach utilised to convey insights, often through careful selection of informant quotes to demonstrate important concepts by way of metaphors, irony, tropes, evocations and synecdoche. Here, fieldnotes are analysed and presented to substantiate inferred categories of analysis (Wolcott, 1975).

As mentioned, ethnographers may also enlist the aid of other researchers and local informants 'to confirm what the observer has seen and recorded' and is consistent with others' interpretations (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 42). More commonly, 'ethnographers request reactions to working analysis or processed material from selected informants' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 42). In this way, confirmation may be sought at various levels of the data collection and analysis process, notably, the description of events and interactions, interpretations of participant meanings and explanations for overall structures and processes (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Further, the publication of results constitutes the presentation of material for peer review (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). In this regard, ethnographers may use a variety of mechanical devices to record and preserve their data. For instance, Mehan (1979) argued for the use of observational techniques in order to record and preserve to the greatest extent the raw data. In this way, the accuracy of the findings may be confirmed by other researchers. Video and audio tape recorders as well as cameras are considered standard equipment in the collection of ethnographic data, however coding and analysis must occur to 'render them usable' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 43). Ethnography, then, is multimodal because

ethnographers generally use a wide range of techniques to supplement and corroborate their fieldnotes (Wilson, 1977; Silverman, 2013).

Ethnographic validity, however, requires methodological techniques of a different sort. Establishing validity ‘requires determining the extent to which conclusions effectively represent empirical reality’ as well as ‘assessing whether constructs devised by the researcher represents or measures the categories of human experience’ (LeCompte & Goetz 1982: 33). To address these concerns in greater depth, it is important to distinguish two concepts clearly, notably, internal and external validity along with the methodological techniques utilised to reduce any distortion of the data. According to Guba and Lincoln, internal validity relates to ‘fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity’ (1989: 245-51). Internal validity refers to the extent to which scientific observations are fair and ‘authentic representations of some reality’ (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 33). From this perspective, internal validity depends upon the immersion of the field worker in the field.

Gold (1958) outlined four levels of role immersion for any field worker. All four encompass significant benefits and challenges for the ethnographer. From this perspective, the ethnographer must carefully manage validity of the findings. Briefly, the *complete observer* is considered a covert approach because the researcher is detached and invisible to participants. The *complete participant* is also considered a covert approach because the researcher is fully immersed and integrated into the setting without disclosing themselves as a researcher (Gold, 1958). By contrast, the *observer as participant* approach is overt where the researcher’s role is to undertake research with brief exposure to participants in order to collect observational data. The *observer as participant* approach is often used for exploration in follow up interviews. Finally,

the *participant as observer* approach is overt, whereby the researcher aims to integrate into the environment. Further, their role within the context of the study is acknowledged (Gold, 1958).

In this ethnographic study, the researcher is firmly operating from the academic field and maintains a clear identity as an outsider. A strong criticism of this model is that, as an outsider, the ethnographer cannot fully understand the practices of the organisational members being observed, nor does she or he have access to the ‘full range of back stage activities’ (Manning, 2009: 766). As Manning stated, ‘there is real difficulty in experiencing the world as an insider while maintaining the detachment of an outsider, who can stand back, explore and challenge the legitimacy, even the authenticity of that experience’ (Manning, 2009: 775). This difficulty suggests that ethnography requires a high degree of reflexivity on the part of the researcher to ensure internal validity and the minimisation of any distortion in the data. Field workers must recognise themselves as data because bias is a distinctly human trait that runs through professional as well as personal pursuits (Manning, 2009).

To extrapolate this point, Van Maanen (2011) argued that a highly interpretative ethnography is an intellectual journey where scholars in the field of study, as much as the ethnographer during the course of her or his sojourn, is encouraged to partake so as to extract great insights and meanings that may be transformative. According to Van Maanen (2011), the process demands much self-criticism on the part of the ethnographer to ensure that every interpretation is acknowledged as being a by-product of the ethnographer’s ideology and biases. Van Maanen (2011) suggested that biases on the part of the ethnographer in attempting the craft of this methodological approach is a very real phenomenon. Moreover, because ethnography seeks to study members of a culture in close proximity, the ethnographer’s biases may transfer into descriptive and interpretative fieldnotes. Therefore, conducting ethnographic research in close

proximity with those being observed and interviewed induces a sense of intimacy and this bears with it, issues of internal validity. As a starting point, LeCompte and Goetz (1982) suggested that field workers should capture what attracted them to the practice of ethnography. This point intrinsically leads to the significance of the ethnographer's reflexive nature during field work.

According to Davies, reflexivity signifies 'a process of self-reference,' in other words, 'the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research' (2008: 4). According to Woolgar (1988), 'the reflexive ethnographer becomes self-conscious of the reflexive process of knowing,' which Woolgar termed 'radical constitutive reflexivity' (Davies 2008: 7). Here, the ethnographer is presented with two significant challenges in relation to the field worker's reflexivity (Rosaldo, 1993). The first problem relates to the degree of self-indulgence, in other words, the ethnographer may become self-absorbed in the course of field work and lose sight of the social and cultural phenomena she or he is studying. The second challenge relates to the description of individual achievements based on goal-orientated interpretations of what reflects a meaningful life (Cohen, 2002). How ethnographers manage such challenges is of great importance for data validity. From this perspective, Chan explains, Maher's (1997) view, that 'critical ethnographers who value reflexivity, reciprocity and giving voice to those marginalised by society are mindful of "validity" issues, and do so by checking the "accuracy of field observation and the veracity of ethnographic interviews,"' in other words, 'through the triangulation of sources' (2013: 505).

One further matter concerning internal validity again points to the insider vis-à-vis outsider relationship of the ethnographer and the blurring of these boundaries while in the field. As a participant-observer, the ethnographer can be considered both an insider and an outsider

during the course of field work (Bruskin, 2019). From this perspective, the dynamics between the overt status of the researcher in relation to the participant may change since the relationship has blurred boundaries and requires continual negotiation and renegotiation during field work (Bruskin, 2019). Further, the presence of the researcher can influence the participant's behaviour, changing the way they perform or act during field observations. Specifically, this phenomenon is known as the 'observer effect' or the 'observer expectancy effect' (Monahan & Fisher, 2010: 357-76).

Direct observer effects may occur when participants become dependent on the ethnographer for personal and professional status enhancement or the satisfaction of psychological needs. In such cases, a symbiotic relationship may develop between ethnographer and participant leading to what some scholars believe causes transference (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Briefly, this thesis adopted the concept of transference as one where an interpersonal experience precluded obtaining data, or, more problematically, distorted data obtained from participants who were affected by what they perceived as a special relationship (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Transference was a responsibility for the ethnographer to carefully manage in this study by 'attempting to avoid problems of entanglement by assuming a position of neutrality' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 46). For instance, detachment could have destroyed rapport and caused participants to infer indifference or even hostility on the part of the researcher (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

According to Argyris (1952), if participants behave strangely, the quality of the data may be adversely impacted. In this sense, 'informants may lie, omit relevant data, or misrepresent their claims' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 46). This may be a consciously planned performance in 'which subjects seek to reveal themselves in the best possible light, or it may be an unconscious

distortion performed to provide what participants believe the researcher wants to see' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 46). In order to mitigate possibilities of transference, this thesis applied a number of techniques to ensure internal validity of the data, including the establishment of several diverse field relationships while gradually and carefully disengaging from participant bonds where the researcher suspected that 'informants were lying, omitting relevant data, or misrepresenting claims' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 46).

As mentioned, another issue concerning internal validity refers to the meaningfulness of the concepts and categories ethnographers develop in relation to the data collected as provided by participants. This process requires effective and efficient data retrieval systems and the rigorous use of auxiliary and alternative sources of data, which serve to 'support the field worker's search for negative instances of tentatively postulated relationships and disconfirming evidence for emerging constructs' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 50). Therefore, participant explanations of events are central among those that ethnographers examine. Another way to control for the development of meaningful concepts is known as 'construct validity' (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

Construct validity includes longevity in the field site and developing an ethnographic research design that facilitates the search for causes and consequences reflected in the data, both prospectively and retrospectively (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). In this way, the degree to which 'abstract terms, generalisations or meanings are shared across times, settings and populations' can be carefully and successfully managed (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 53).

As stated, 'external validity addresses the degree to which representations may be compared legitimately to groups' (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982: 33). From this perspective, external validity might be considered one of the major strengths of the ethnographic method, particularly when

ethnographic data is compared to survey studies, experimentation and other quantitatively based research designs (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). It is common practice that the ethnographer becomes immersed among participants collecting data for long periods. In this regard, the extended time the ethnographer had with participants provided opportunities for continual data analysis and comparison to refine constructs as well as to ensure a match between scientific categories and the subjective experience of participants (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). This ethnographic analysis incorporated a process of the researcher's reflexivity, by exposing all phases of the research activity by way of questioning and reevaluating the relationship between the researcher and participants. This process ensured that the final account was reflective of the groups under investigation (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

To sum up, the methodological specificities that underpin this doctoral research are as follows: Firstly, whilst this doctoral research is not structured as a traditional ethnographic monograph that applies grounded theory, it does rely on an interpretative conceptual framework that seeks to address research questions and to explain the findings as a part of the ongoing interplay between collecting and interpreting data. Secondly, this doctoral research seeks to express this interplay by applying a realist ethnographic stance, that is, by way of observing and organising the collected artefactual materials written descriptively and interpretatively in line with the interpretative conceptual framework as addressed in Chapter Three. From this perspective, organisational artefacts were documented through routine events including the practiced values and rituals of participants as well as the accumulation of the researcher's insights by examining the participants themselves, evident through finer details of data collection that indicated the ethnographer's proximity, familiarity and intimacy with participants in the field work setting (Van Maanen, 2011). To reiterate, this doctoral research empirically applied the emic concept in order to interpret *the language of participants* and, thereby, understand the meanings attributed

to everyday organisational life *from their perspective*. Close proximity to participants and the ethnographer's immersion in the field as a *participant as observer* were carefully managed to ensure reliability and validity of the data.

Specifically, this thesis applied methodological techniques to manage issues concerning data reliability and validity by: carefully inviting and selecting members of the organisation to be part of the research based on factors such as accessibility and willingness; thickly describing observational data and verbatim accounts resulting from participant semi-structured interviews; practicing adequate and meaningful coding, conceptualising and categorising techniques for all field work data including observational, interview, and mechanically derived data; engaging in careful reflexive management while also managing issues relating to the blurring of 'insider-outsider' boundaries documented by the researcher during the course of field work and; engaging in peer review prior to the publication of the research findings, thereby offering an ethnographic account that is not only considered academically reliable and valid, but more significantly represents the meanings and authoring perspectives of staff members in a contemporary NSW public sector organisation, Service NSW. The next section of this chapter specifically addresses the ethnographic research design according to Van Maanen's (2011) three staged methodological frame work.

Research Design

This ethnographic and qualitative methods case study seeks to answer a number of research questions by applying the framework as outlined in Chapter Three to analyse the data. An interpretive conceptual framework of organisational culture, normative control and the self seeks to address the following three questions:

1. What are the prominent characteristics of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture that affect every day work in the organisation, such as the organisation's values, norms, rules and rituals?
2. How have the machinery of government changes that were introduced in 2018-19 by the Department of Customer Service affected the characteristics of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture?
3. How were the changes experienced by Service NSW staff members when interacting at work?

The next section outlines the organisation and field site selection process as well as the ethical considerations taken in preparing for the *participant as observer* role, including the level of immersion this role required in Service NSW.

Preparing for the Field

In seeking to address the research questions, this thesis adopted a case study (Yin, 2009) approach that enabled descriptive and interpretative possibilities. According to Yin (2009), case study research is highly suitable for researching complex phenomena. Yin explained that case study research in ‘real life’ settings is particularly ‘useful when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ (2009: 18). In this regard, a case study approach enabled the analysis of an interpretative conceptual framework that incorporated complex and intertwined phenomena including, ideology (Geertz, 1973), managerial ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992), presentation ritual (Kunda), organisational culture (Martin, 2001), organizational subcultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987) and dramaturgical configurations of the self (Goffman, 1973) in various sites of enactment (Van Maanen, 1979).

This thesis adopted an ethnographic case study approach centred on one organisation, Service NSW. While a thorough review of Service NSW is provided in Chapter Five, briefly stated, Service NSW is a Not-For-Profit (NFP), NSW public sector government agency located in the McKell Building, 2-24 Rawson Avenue, in Sydney's Haymarket district in the state of New South Wales (NSW). Service NSW is responsible for transactional services for NSW citizens and residents. Its mission is to provide transactional services through excellent customer service, deliver effective partnerships with other government agencies and to simplify the way customers do business with the NSW government (Service NSW, 2018). Service NSW delivers services to customers and businesses throughout its network of 107 Service Centres, 32 council agencies and 10 self-serve digital kiosks, a Virtual Contact Centre (VCC) with one single 24/7 phone number, a transactional website and the Service NSW App (Service NSW, 2019-20). Service NSW delivers the NSW Premier's Priorities and NSW State Priorities of improving government services to the residents of NSW.

In October 2018, during the early stages of research for this thesis, Service NSW expressed their interest in participating in the study. A careful examination of the existing literatures pertaining to case study selection and ethnographic methods, Post New Public Management (PNPM) as well as organisational management literatures revealed several empirical gaps which could be addressed by studying Service NSW. The official participation of Service NSW was confirmed on 15th July 2019 upon signing of the organisational approval letter.

Ethical Considerations

A number of ethical considerations were taken into account in developing the methodological approach for this ethnographic research. Firstly, this doctoral research complies with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (NHMRC 2018) as well as

Macquarie University's Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. Macquarie University's Human Research Ethics Committee granted approval for this qualitative case study research to commence in February 2020 (Reference Number: 52020546613975).

Accordingly, participants were invited to take part in the study by their organisation, Service NSW. All participants were informed that the research was part of a PhD project conducted at Macquarie University's Business School and that participation was completely voluntary. Once contact was made by Service NSW staff, participants who expressed interest were asked to sign a Participant Information and Consent Form (See Appendix II) to confirm their informed consent. The PICF explained the purpose of the research, including details relating to participant observation, the interview process, the dissemination of results and the assured confidentiality and anonymity of participants. The PICF also provided the details of the thesis supervisors and contact details for the Macquarie University Ethics Committee in case any participant required further information or had any concerns. Secondly, all participants who took part in interviews were requested to read and sign the PICF which clearly outlined the option to withdraw from the interview at any time should they wish to. Before any interviews were conducted, the researcher outlined the confidentiality requirements and the protection of participant anonymity as well as the researcher's responsibility to ensure that all private and sensitive organisational information would be kept strictly confidential. The PICF explained that any participant concerns or issues that arose before, during or after the interviews or during ethnographic observations would be addressed immediately by the researcher. The anonymity of participant data was also protected through the use of pseudonyms. Once data was collected through fieldnotes, audio and Zoom recordings, the data was and will continue to be safely stored under password protected folders on the researcher's laptop which is always locked when not in direct use. Confidentiality was also ensured for all conversations with participants that

occurred as part of field work observations. Furthermore, careful editing of transcripts ensured omissions of any words or wording that could identify participants.

In the Field

This section outlines the methodological approach taken to the ethnographic field work, including recording of fieldnotes, participant observations, semi-structured interviews and auxiliary data collection in order to empirically apply the interpretative conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Three to answer the research questions.

The collection of data has followed Spradley's (1979) methodological approach for recording observational fieldnotes. This included short notes made at the time of field activities, expanded notes made as soon as possible after each field session and the use of a field work journal to record continuous descriptive and interpretative insights during each stage of the field work. In addition, this thesis applied Kunda's (2009; 2013) methods for capturing a provisional running record and interpretation of the researcher's observations in the field, including a self-reflexive component. Constant reflection is part of the methodological approach adopted for this ethnographic research that enhanced both the reliability and validity of the data by providing the researcher an opportunity to reflect on the data, both in situ and retrospectively.

As part of the observational data, levels 19 and 20 of the McKell Building occupied by Service NSW were documented along with the building's various structures, inner architecture, office layout, positioning of organisational members and teams in the office along with other sensory impressions, including contextualized settings, notably, notice boards, images and pictures located in situ. Observations were conducted of a relevant subset of organisational members during the length of the field work as per permissions from Service NSW, including the

continuation of research during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, broader detailed descriptions were recorded in fieldnotes including what the researcher observed or heard in general settings and documented in realist, verbatim reports. Capturing natural conversations and interactions of organisational members was one of this study's major challenges. One dimension of the field work research was to accurately describe the behavioural displays of organisational members including interactive, spontaneous participant dialogue, observed and recorded in note form, formal and informal gatherings where staff members congregate, including the kitchen, cafeteria, lifts, meeting rooms, office cubicles, events as well as dedicated areas for private discussion. This approach facilitated rich descriptions of scenes, encounters and relationships between staff members, including those of broader presentation rituals, meetings and social events which captured the various norms, values and the behaviours of the organisation's staff members.

As noted earlier, individuals selected for participation in this study included staff members employed at Service NSW, McKell Building. Approximately 260 Service NSW staff members were employed at this location prior to the COVID-19 lockdown. To address the impact of the lockdown that occurred two months after the commencement of the field work research, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted via phone and Zoom calls and explored participant's reflections on their experiences of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture and the cultural changes implemented since the commencement of the Department of Customer Service (DCS) during 2018-19. To ensure a diverse range of perspectives, multiple informants from different departments were invited to participate in order to capture all levels of the employment hierarchy and authority within the organisation. An invitation was circulated to all staff with the encouragement for employees at all levels of seniority and all lengths of employment to participate in interviews. This enabled the researcher to conduct interviews

with a relatively heterogenous mix of people representative of gender, ethnicity and organisational tenure (See Appendix V).

Following Ethics approval from Macquarie University (reference no. 52020546613975), assistance in making contact with Service NSW staff was provided by the Executive Director of People and Culture and the Director for Social Impact who had agreed to support the doctoral research. The Director of Social Impact sent an email to all employees who worked in the McKell Building prior to the COVID-19 lockdown which invited them to participate in the research. Seventy-Four interviews took place over a ten-month period between February and December, 2020. The interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes in length using the semi-structured questions as outlined in the interview guide (See Appendix III). To enable participants to speak frankly about their perceptions and experiences within their organisation, confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed by the researcher in accordance with ethics guidelines. In addition, interviews were recorded using the Zoom platforms and shorthand fieldnotes were produced immediately after interviews in order to descriptively document participant insights as well as any unspoken and tacit interactive gestures or patterns observed.

Finally, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Each transcription was allocated a unique code to ensure participant anonymity. This individualised code identifies the department, the profession and the participant number and is linked to the participant's real name in a password-secured file. Interview data has been supplemented by the identification and documentation of auxiliary organisational artefacts. Other sources collected for data analysis included annual reports, intranet communications as well as in-house publications, video recordings, archival materials, including newsletters, papers, memos, brochures, posters as well as grey literature on various NSW public sector websites. This broader source of

material was especially valuable for identifying the characteristics of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture.

The Write Up

This section outlines several components required to adequately conduct the write up phase of this ethnographic case study beginning with the preparation of ethnographic fieldnotes and interview data and followed by a description of how the data was analysed and interpreted. Lastly, the limitations of the research design as a result of COVID-19 are discussed.

The data preparation phase centred on reading all generated fieldnotes including observational notes, transcribed interview data and observational fieldnotes recorded of participants in context, organisational artefacts as well as notes documented in the field work journal. Common themes and patterns emerging from the interview data were documented according to the conceptual framework and coding scheme (See Appendix IV). This study adopted Kunda’s (2013) methodological field note handling and interpretative approach which included reading, cataloguing, creating, combining and redefining categories and also discarding fieldnotes that did not provide deeper insights. Thematic analysis was a critical stage in preparing the collected data for review and involved carefully teasing apart larger themes by creating, combining and redefining categories. According to Kunda, theme development is best approached by asking one central question, ‘what is this an example of?’ (2013: 17). When answering this specific question, inferences can be made to previous concepts and theories and or the creation of new ones which become evident as finer coding of the data transpires. NVivo software was used in the course of coding and categorising the data to assist in presenting the empirical data in Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven as well as the final interpretations of the data presented in Chapter Twelve.

Research Limitations: *Participant-as-Observer* during COVID-19

In August 2018, the Service NSW Director for People and Policy offered me the opportunity to conduct research on Service NSW. This Director left Service NSW after the Department of Customer Service initiated the Organisational Development Restructure with the establishment of the Department of Customer Service and the Shared Corporate Services model. Subsequent discussions with various Executive Directors across Service NSW and the Department of Customer Service regarding the potential value of the research for the organisation resulted in a positive response and a willingness to approve my PhD research on the organisation.

During my field work, I was provided with an access card, the opportunity to occupy a hot desk alongside all other public servants as the organisation was moving toward Activity Based Working (ABW) arrangements. I was also provided a Dell laptop and access to email as well as whatever other administrative assistance I required to carry out my field work. I was also given a photo ID card with an accompanying lanyard granting me access to the McKell Building's security gates, elevators and offices. This card also allowed me to use the printers when I needed. My security credentials also allowed me access to the Department of Customer Service and Service NSW intranet. In short, I was given all the necessary tools needed to conduct my research on-site.

I was introduced to Support Officer staff members and I was left, more, or less, to my own devices. I was initially introduced to the Social Impact and Engagement Team where my role evolved into that of an insider (Bruskin, 2019). I was often invited to give feedback and offer ideas in meetings I attended. At the same time, however, it was made clear to me that to many of the employees, the exact nature of my work remained ambiguous and for this reason it

appeared ‘insiders’ were not willing to share all information with me. This situation changed drastically once the COVID-19 pandemic’s lockdown occurred. All Support Office public servants were generally mandated to work from home until such time that the pandemic was under control. Interactions with participants shifted from face-to-face to various online platforms while they worked from home. In this context, it appeared to me they became far less self-conscious in exchanges. The ability to establish relationships with participants before the pandemic was extremely valuable as it provided the basis for quality interactions once interviews moved online.

These relationships were forged between February and March 2020, before the lockdown when I was a *participant as observer* in the McKell Building head office of Service NSW. During this period, I spent an average of three days per week within the Social Impact and Frontline Engagement team within Service Delivery, attending important events, including inductions, trainings and team meetings. I was also invited to a variety of private meetings with Support Office staff. Through this field work I was able to establish a number of key professional relationships with participants and became acquainted with various others who offered their personal insights on what it meant to work at Service NSW. During June to December 2020, COVID-19 resulted in on and off working from home arrangements for Support Office staff members. During this time, I carried out 74 Zoom interviews (See Appendix V), many with those I had developed working relationships with prior to lockdown.

Early on during the field work, the Chief People Officer of the Department of Customer Service requested to be included in the PhD research. This addition made it possible to extend the research focus with the potential to include other cluster agencies. Through the Department of Customer Service’s Chief People and Culture Officer, I was able to connect with the Director

of Employee Engagement, an opportunity which provided valuable insights into the functioning of the DCS. Obtaining DCS research data offered contrasting perspectives of organisational cultures across the NSW public service. However, in order to ensure that my effort was not diluted, I retained my primary focus on Service NSW in order to ensure the quality and depth of my data gathering and capacity to investigate the subjective experience of staff members in Service NSW were not compromised.

Efforts to assist me by Service NSW participants in the research grew as the year progressed. Some participants reflected quite deeply on their work experiences by offering very personal stories of their struggles, both inside and outside of working life mostly within the Service Delivery division of Service NSW as well as the organisation's Frontline workers who were employed at various Service Centres across NSW.

The Service Delivery team is divided largely into two sub-teams, 'Support Office' and the 'Frontline.' The Social Impact and Engagement Team forms part of the Service Delivery Support Office team and is located in the McKell Building. At the time of my field work, the team was led by a Director and consisted of approximately ten public servants as follows: a Training Manager for the creation and roll out of various technical and behavioural induction programs; a Communications Manager, responsible for internal and external publications, including newsletters generated by the organisation, a Traineeship and Internship Program Manager responsible for refugee interns, as well as a variety of other personnel responsible for the delivery and support of ad hoc business requirements, including the making of 'packs' - carefully crafted PowerPoint presentations usually tailored for meetings with the members of the Executive Leadership Team, senior managers and or other Executive Directors, both inside Service NSW and the Department of Customer Service. During 2020, the Social Impact and

Frontline Engagement team grew significantly as Service NSW was considered a pivotal government organisation involved in supporting the management of COVID-19. In this regard, *Project 1000* played a significant role insofar as it included the recruitment and hiring of 1000 new public servants, many of who were training specialists and training leads to handle the increased training demands to enable the upskilling of Frontline staff hired as part of the project. The Social Impact and Frontline Engagement team members, therefore, were highly visible to the rest of the organisation in their attempts to deliver favourable results for the NSW public. Through this team, I gained access to various training programs and a high-level overview of the entire organisation. This did not, however, give me automatic access to the everyday workings of the Executive Leadership Team.

During the early months of field work in the McKell Building, I initially made contact with staff members by email or in person. As mentioned, the Director of Social Impact and Frontline Engagement also announced my presence as a PhD student to all Support Office staff members and encouraged their participation in the research. Most responses were of a friendly nature. Organisational members from different teams and departments appeared quite willing to share their thoughts. While in the office, I was able to use fieldnotes to document the various slogans and signs in the offices and lobby areas of the building. I made an effort to participate in all public activities I was invited to, including presentations, group meetings and training sessions. I was rarely invited to the sorts of meetings that could highlight high degrees of discontent. However, much later in the research process, after I had established much deeper relationships with staff members during the course of COVID-19 when participants worked from home, participants were comfortable to reveal significant cultural ambiguities and discontents during interviews conducted via Zoom.

During the course of my field work, I was also invited to strategy planning days, staff meetings and review meetings. During the early months of my time in the field, I initiated day-long observations anywhere that I could find a comfortable seat. Hot-desking, meetings, drinking coffee and having lunch in the dedicated locations for these activities provided excellent opportunities for observational ethnographic work. In this context, I was able to draw on the semi-structured interview guide based on Spradley's (1979) questioning techniques I had developed. Asking contrasting questions seemed to work well to at least clarify in my mind what I was observing and documenting at the time. I asked myself various types of questions and I took these newly formed questions back to my participants and awaited the findings. Sometimes the refined interpretations emerged several days, weeks or months later. Emerging interpretations naturally prompted new questions for inquiry as the field work progressed. The process repeated itself until I finally felt I had largely achieved the goals of my field work, notably, to gain insights into the subjective experiences of Service NSW employees. I also removed myself from level 19 and 20 when it was time to settle into interpretative writing mode and opted for the cafeteria on level 4 instead. Along with Spradley's (1979) field note methods, my writings were also separated into three parts: detailed realist descriptions; floating interpretative thoughts and subjective feelings associations and memories. Also worthy of note, during field work, I either handed or emailed copies of the Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF) to all interviewees in order to comply with ethics regulations. All participants promptly consented by signing the forms and were either handed or emailed back to me for secure storage.

As mentioned, following the COVID-19 lockdown, I collected data via phone and Zoom interviews and I also attended planned or ad hoc meetings when invited by the Service Delivery team or other Service NSW employees I had met during the first months of field work. I was

also able to spend time in Service Centres observing and taking fieldnotes because these Centres remained open, albeit with strict social distancing measures in place to protect both customers and employees. My field work began by writing lengthy descriptive observations of the environment and the staff within it and proceeded by initiating a hybrid model for interviews which included both extensive unstructured to semi-structured questions. Initial interviews ran for approximately one hour, although many interviews ran well over the pre-arranged allocated length of time and a few ran in excess of five hours cumulatively during the course of field work. Some participants invited me to meet again to continue dialogue. I also selected and invited certain participants to continue the interview process. All agreed. Given some of the comments I experienced during the interviews, I came to understand my role as more than a *participant as observer*, as one Support Office staff member conveyed, ‘thanks so much for this time, part therapy, part feedback session’ (Interview with Inness on 16th November, 2020).

Upon reflection, it was quite possible during those selected interactions with participants I personally found more interesting, that I exuded a deeper sense of engagement and consequently where I felt the highest level of rapport was built. This factor may have contributed to longer interviews with those particular participants and where data seemed to be captured most easily and frequently. I was initially focused on asking participants about basic details relating to the circumstances of their current work arrangements. These questions included previous work histories, why they were interested to work for the public service and specifically for Service NSW. Occasionally, participants discussed their childhood histories and their dreams of working in service of others. In essence, I tried to follow Kunda’s (2013) advice, by following whatever lines of thought people were willing to develop while concurrently aiming to have my semi-structured interview questions answered (See Appendix III).

The field work was characterised by a continual flux with regard to my role vis-à-vis Service NSW and its organisational members. During the initial months of field work, I was considered a researcher and a less permeable boundary was placed between me and the staff members of the team. Although invitations to take part in team meetings made it seem as if I was being considered as an ‘insider’ (Bruskin, 2019), I recognised that I was outsider. Like all organisational ethnographic work, the extent of my access was ‘inversely related to hierarchical level’ (Kunda, 2009: 244). As Kunda articulated, ‘one indicator of power is the ability to preserve privacy’ (2009: 244). My interactions with the Executive Leadership Team, both within Service NSW and The Department of Customer Service (DCS) were limited to some interviews that were predominately descriptive in substance. Much like Kunda’s (2013) research experience, I considered these interviews as good exemplars of what one would consider rhetoric. Indeed, a number of the Executive Directors took a keen interest in my research and made themselves available upon request. Most of my routine contacts, however, were Support Office staff members, including middle managers and Frontline employees. The age of the average participant varied significantly and most participants were women (See Appendix V). Demographically diverse staff, some would consider ‘marginal’ participated in my research, including refugees.

Due to COVID-19, my access to the dense social network and the informal aspects of life at Service NSW was curtailed since locked-down required that work be conducted within the home environment for Support Office staff. As mentioned, the working from home arrangements offered unexpected benefits. Rather than the corporate suit, or classic business attire, I was given visual access into the sanctuaries of people’s home offices. Rapport seemed to evolve more effortlessly one-on-one, over Zoom. Interviews via Zoom, from time to time, also took place outside of business hours, in an effort to avoid ‘COVID Coma’ (Interview with

James on 11th September, 2020), what I came to learn were feelings of boredom due to routine Zoom meetings during lockdown. I tried to be as flexible as possible allowing participants to dictate the length, time and date of interviews.

Despite the constraints caused by the COVID-19 lockdown, I was inundated with information. By the time my field work was complete, I had amassed and had tried to thoughtfully categorise piles upon piles of material in my home office, lounge room and upon my dining table. Computer output, newsletters, papers, emails, memos, brochures and books, just a few worth mentioning entirely covered the floors in several of my rooms at home. I began the formal analysis and writing the remaining data chapters of my PhD during the last months of my field work. I followed Kunda's (2013) methods as precisely as I could, with the first step being reading and re-reading my fieldnotes. I then loosely catalogued my fieldnotes followed by careful rounds of coding which led to creating new codes, discarding others and renaming almost all of them at some point during the coding process. The final version of this thesis emerged after countless revisions of drafts, refining and sharpening concepts, writing descriptions, each time with greater degrees of accuracy and with deepening interpretations. In essence, the process eventually became somewhat rhythmical: reading and re-reading; writing and rewriting.

My field work experience offered me an opportunity to develop working relationships with staff employed in the McKell Building both before and during the COVID-19 lockdown. This experience presented both challenges and opportunities for capturing valid data both, it seems, as an 'insider' and an 'outsider' (Bruskin, 2019). To provide data reflecting the relevant localised contexts, Chapter Seven offers broader descriptive accounts of Service NSW's organisational setting including the McKell Building, notably levels 19 and 20 of Service NSW's Support Office as well as descriptions of the Haymarket Service Centre.

Conclusion to Chapter Four

This chapter identified the methodological approach adopted for this ethnographic case study. The first section outlined the long-running debates concerning inductive and deductive methods for knowledge production (Lindlof, 2008). The second section discussed the stages of field work (Freilich, 1970), representing the validity of ethnographic methods. On this basis, the value of etic and emic perspectives (Pike, 1967) for this ethnographic and qualitative methods study were addressed and the approach to be taken to operationalise the research was outlined. Most significantly, issues relating to reliability and validity (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982) were addressed to ensure scholarly rigour and credibility.

This chapter also documented three essential phases in conducting field work according to Van Maanen's methodological framework (2011), notably, *Preparing for the Field*, *In the field* and *The Write Up*. The first stage, *Preparing for the Field*, included the process of selecting Service NSW as the organisation of choice. In addition, ethical considerations for this research were addressed. The second stage, *In the Field*, highlighted fieldnote recording techniques along with participant selection, interviewing, transcription and preliminary data coding methods. The third stage, *The Write Up*, outlined the steps taken to prepare all fieldnotes, including interview transcripts for data analysis and interpretation as well as the methodological limitations of the study. A reflexive account on the part of the researcher explained the process of entry into the organisation and the COVID-19 limitations, challenges and opportunities that were faced in the course of carrying out the field work research. The next chapter describes the research context in detail, including a review of Post New Public Management and its impact on Service NSW. The empirical data is presented in Chapters Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten and Eleven followed by an interpretation of the data in Chapter Twelve.

Chapter Five

Research Context: Post New Public Management, The Department of Customer Service and Service NSW

Introduction

This chapter discusses a multi-level perspective concerning the relevant meso level and macro level contexts within the Australian political landscape. Firstly, the factors that affect public sector management in NSW, the social context encompassing the State's demographic diversity, the NSW Public Sector that provides the political and organisational context for Service NSW and its partner agencies are discussed. Secondly, this chapter introduces the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. In this regard, the Service NSW organisational structure and its espoused model of culture, specifically, a model of customer centricity is presented. Attention is also given to the chronology of activities that the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) engaged in to promote a customer centric policy in order to facilitate alignment with the NSW Premier's Goals (NSW, 2021).

Providing an overview of these multiple contexts provides a foundation for understanding the empirical data. As Kunda (2009) argued, managerial ideology and forms of normative control may lead 'to heavy claims against the self' (2009: 13). Here, 'what one does, thinks or feels indeed, who one is is not just a matter of private concern, but the legitimate domain of bureaucratic control structures armed with increasingly sophisticated techniques of influence' (Kunda, 2009: 13). According to Kunda, the power that organisations have over their employees' subjective experience raises practical consequences of critical importance, 'the problem of the relationship of self and society' (2009: 13-14). Accordingly, this chapter begins

to unravel the organisation's key ideological influences and the authoritative systems of cultural meaning by examining the impact of neoliberalism and Post New Public Management (PNPM) practice that underpins normative control (Kunda, 2009) in the NSW Public Sector and the case study organisation, Service NSW. The chapter begins with an overview of Public Sector Management as this scholarship frames the approach taken to the administration of Service NSW and the management of its prescribed 'DNA' culture.

Public Sector Management

In Australia, a range of scholars have argued that the influence of neoliberalism on social, political and economic systems has increased over recent decades (Beeson & Firth, 1998; Quiggin, 1999; O'Neill & Moore, 2005; Cooper & Ellem, 2008; Boston, 2010; Hall, Gunter & Bragg, 2013). According to Duggan, neoliberalism is 'the rhetoric of privatisation, competitiveness and personal responsibility that promises the attainment of economic goals, and panders to middle class aspirational values of self-reliance and personal responsibility' (2003: 14). As Halligan (2007) pointed out, this rhetoric and its corresponding values are increasingly evident in the routine functioning of government agencies. In government agencies, neoliberal ideology became noticeable with the emergence of Public Management, a discourse that favoured the vernacular of private enterprise along with its approaches to managing organisational structure, practices and incentives (Andrews, Beynon & McDermott, 2019). Scholarly interest in these developments has resulted in an extensive literature on the New Public Management (NPM) and Post New Public Management (PNPM). Given this critical analysis focuses on one public sector agency, it is important to begin with an overview of the NPM, its origins and the broad impact of PNPM across the NSW Public Sector from an employee perspective.

New Public Management, Post New Public Management and Public Servants

Weber's (1978) 'public administration' dominated public sector modelling until the publication of *The Functions of the Executive* (Barnard, 1938). In this regard, Weber's classical approach was replaced by a system that moved toward 'meeting the needs and wishes of citizens in consultation with and direct representation of citizens' (de Vries & Nemec, 2012: 11). According to Barzelay (2001), prior to the 1970s, Public Management was considered a process through which governmental policies were formulated, how resources were allocated and programs were implemented. After the 1970s, the potential for policy change in the area of Public Management increased as a result of inflation, high unemployment and negative public perceptions of bureaucracy. As Barzelay (2001) noted, during the 1980s, Public Management morphed into an active area of policy making in numerous countries, including Australia. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 'established its Public Management Committee and Secretariat (PUMA) conferring to Public Management the status normally accorded more conventional domains of policy' (Barzelay, 2001: 2). According to Johnston (2000), during the 1980s, public managers concentrated their efforts on high performance and accountability. Public Managers also sought to restructure bureaucratic agencies and redefine organisational missions while streamlining agency processes and decentralising decision making (Johnston, 2000). In many cases, governments successfully privatised previously public functions by ensuring top executives were held accountable for agency performance goals (Johnston, 2000). In this regard, public agencies established new processes for measuring productivity and effectiveness and by re-engineering departmental systems to reflect an improved commitment to accountability (Johnston, 2000). As Boston argued, 'public agencies should be subject to competitive pressures and responsive to customer preferences' with 'rigorous expenditure controls ... imposed and management freedoms extended' (2010: 19). The reason for these changes, according to Boston, were 'simple' and a

‘sign of the times’ as the ‘lower economic growth rates and large fiscal deficits’ required governments to better control their public expenditures (Boston, 2010, 19). Consequently, public agency resources would be impacted (Boston, 2010).

During the 1990s, many governments embarked upon more generalised public sector reform, including decentralisation, privatisation, incorporation as well as deregulation and re-regulation, the introduction of executive agencies and internal markets as well as tendering and bidding schemes (Ferlie, Fitzgerald & Pettigrew, 1996). These reforms sought to professionalise Public Management by employing those who could manage contracts between governments and their constituents, notably, public agencies. This changed approach to managing the public sector was termed ‘New Public Management’ (NPM) (Barzelay, 2001: 2). According to Quiggin, the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s were ‘designed to reduce nation-state capacity in order to make room for market forces and to unleash the untapped dynamism of the business sector’ (2021, *Dismembering Government*). In this regard, NPM was designed to ‘bring in generic managerial skills,’ and ‘to formulate strategies that can then be specified in contractual forms’ (Quiggin, 2021, *Dismembering Government*).

Hood (1991), Walsh (1995) and Flynn (2002) explained that New Public Management drew on scholarship and concepts from political science, economics and organisational theory. Of immense significance in this regard was a landmark book authored by Osborne and Gaebler (1992) *Reinventing Government*, which proposed that the United States (US) government could increase its performance while concurrently reducing costs. According to Denhart, notions concerning NPM were explained in ten governing principles as follows:

Governments under New Public Management should be catalytic (steering rather than rowing), community owned (empowering rather than serving), competitive by injecting competition into service delivery, mission-driven instead of rule-driven, results-orientated, customer-driven, enterprising, anticipatory, decentralised and market-orientated (Denhart, 2004: 136).

According to Rhodes (2016), NPM reforms arrived in waves. The first wave reflected 'managerialism or hands-on professional management, explicit standards and measures of performance, managing by results and value for money' (Rhodes, 2016: 640). The second wave according to Rhodes reflected 'marketisation or neoliberal beliefs about market competition,' including the introduction of 'incentive structures' through 'contracting out.' (2016: 640). While the third wave resulted in 'service delivery and citizen choice,' for which initiatives combined and resulted in 'ambiguities' and 'blurred accountabilities' (2016: 640-41), a point to which Rhodes argued that ethnographic field work would be one that is a 'well-suited' research methodology to unpack the fragmentary nature of the public service and the 'craft of public servants' (2016: 645).

NPM appeared to propose a systematic way for governing duties and responsibilities to serve citizens through three kinds of tasks: 'the allocation of goods and services, income maintenance and the regulation of markets and the private sector' (Lane, 2000: 9). Boston argued that NPM reforms were driven by three traditions, including managerialist administration theory, 'new economics of organisations and 'comparative institutional analysis' (2010: 17). NPM managerialism incorporated a heavy reliance on incentives, whereby carefully structured incentives and sanctions were assumed to drive performance, including monitoring and controlling behaviour (Boston, 2010). In addition, under NPM, the government managed the public sector by means of a set of contracts and competitive rules (O'Neill & Alford, 1994;

Considine & Painter, 1997). One significant outcome having adopted NPM is that ‘public sector organisations frequently contract out “steering” tasks to consulting firms such as McKinsey & Company and Accenture, which provide policy advice that typically involves even more outsourcing’ (Quiggin, 2021, *Dismembering Government*). Indeed, Boston (2010) believed that several problems can arise under such contractual arrangements. One specific problem proposed by Boston reflects that ‘principles often find it difficult and or costly to monitor the performance of agents and verify whether they have fulfilled their contract’ (2010: 26).

In addition, NPM included hiring CEOs by government agencies, whether as purchasers or as regulators. Lane (2000) noted that governments required professionals who could collaborate, negotiate and execute the myriad of contracts that were formed under institutional mechanisms. Contracts under NPM, therefore, required relevant information about what was to be done including work load expectations as well as agreed upon compensation (Lane, 2000). In this regard, Hood claimed NPM ‘shifted away from traditional modes of legitimising the public bureaucracy, such as procedural safeguards on administrative discretion, in favour of trusting the market ... couched in the language of economic rationalism’ (1995: 94). In other words, market rationalisation assumes that employees are ‘empowered’ and ‘to a greater extent than previously imagined, are to manage themselves’ (Kunda & Ailon Souday, 2009: 205). As Kunda and Ailon Souday (2009) explained, the scheme consists of:

an old stick and new carrot. The old stick is the constant threat of discharge. Forging a new employment contract that fosters no expectations for job security (and often glorifies its opposite) ... [it] implies or openly suggests that employers should offer employees their trust, but not their commitment. Employees are to be treated as entrepreneurs, as a ‘business’ within a business, each of them responsible to develop a

‘portfolio’ of skills they can sell and to sustain a market for themselves within the organisation. Competing with anyone else who can do their job, they have to realise that in contemporary organisations, there are no long-term promises, no strings attached. It is up to them to rise above the competition, up to them to survive, up to them to sustain their own career (Kunda & Ailon Souday, 2009: 206-07).

Indeed, from the outset, the NPM approach sparked debates and ‘egalitarian critiques’ and claims that ‘bureau-shaping’ senior managers would find it in their ‘interest to push excessively hard for budget-cutting, contracting out’ or corporatisation (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994: 12). In addition, public servants could favour ‘management avoidance’ by ‘externalising responsibility and blame’ (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994: 12). The authors argued that privatisation could create opportunities to reshape public sector organisations in the interests of senior managers and policy makers, while the costs of change would be borne by other less powerful interests, including frontline staff (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994). Dunleavy and Hood (1994) reasoned that ‘large-scale marketising’ reforms could ‘increase the risks of corruption in the public service’ (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994: 12). In their view, NPM risked making government much less ‘comprehensible, accountable and accessible’ to citizens (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994: 12).

Although much of the NPM discourse was underpinned by ‘close to the customer’ management, decentralisation of service delivery and client choice, coordination could all suffer from the ‘effects of single mission agencies’ (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994: 13). For these scholars, ‘making government structures more transparent to accountants comes at the expense of the citizens ability to understand the distribution of lead agency responsibilities among a jungle of organisations handling inter-related problems’ (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994: 13). Moreover, according to Boston’s (2010) views concerning public theory, NPM also presented bureaucrats

with the opportunity to misuse resources along with the ‘risk of politicians favouring partisan objectives and short term electoral considerations over wider interests and of pressure groups engaging in rent-seeking behaviour at the expense of taxpayers, consumers and citizens’ (2010: 24). Indeed, underpinning these factors required that public servants and politicians display ‘stewardship,’ in essence, always appearing to follow the rules, ‘keep everything going’ and to ask themselves ‘what will this look like on the front page of *The Daily Telegraph*’ (Rhodes, 2016: 643-44).

According to Reiter and Klenk, NPM reflected significant issues, including a ‘negative impact’ on the ‘communicative capacity of public administration,’ an issue that consequently causes ‘informational deficiencies’ (2019: 18). Yet despite such criticisms, particularly in relation to output and efficiency, NPM paved the way for a further reform agenda, referred to as ‘Post New Public Management,’ (PNPM), ‘an umbrella term used to prescribe and or describe different reform trends’ (Reiter & Klenk, 2019: 11). Post New Public Management has more recently been associated with terms such as ‘whole-of-government’ or ‘digital-era governance’ (Reiter & Klenk, 2019: 16).

While the term Post New Public Management describes reforms that are aimed at attenuating the negative consequences of NPM (Johnston, 2000), this new reform trend, ‘is often seen to include elements such as coordination improvements, steering capacity enhancements’ that are reflective of ‘the political or politico-administrative centre, improvement of the network management capabilities of public managers and the strengthening of the responsiveness and democratic accountability of public sector’ organisations (Reiter & Klenk, 2019: 12). As Christensen and Laegreid observed, from a user perspective, ‘PNPM reforms were expected to enhance the political accountability for public sector organisations by strengthening the

political legitimacy of public service through improved democratic political control' (2011: 142). Christensen and Laegreid (2011) argued that PNPM measures affirmed a political perspective instead of focusing on a functional perspective of accountability related to the administrative output and, thus, concentrated on participation and democratic legitimisation. With respect to citizens, PNPM has emphasised ideas of representative and inclusive bureaucracy, deliberation and stakeholder participation and in relation to service provision, trust-based collaboration (Christensen & Laegreid, 2011). From this perspective, the PNPM approach represents the State as a partner on par with its citizens or residents, intent on regaining control over public administration and public service provision (Christensen & Laegreid, 2011). In this regard, Aldridge and Stoker (2002) and Stoker (2006), argued that public service agencies should adopt five elements, including a culture of performance, strong public accountability, universal access to services, professional and responsible employment practices and a positive contribution to the wellbeing of the community.

In the Australian political context, the federal Labor Government, led by Prime Minister Bob Hawke in the late 1980s and 1990s, was the first national government to adopt NPM (Johnston, 2000). According to Aucoin, power is highly concentrated within the Australian political system whereby political staff are 'intimately involved in ... the political communications function,' notwithstanding the 'public service communications of ministers; departments and government's corporate communications' (2010: 40). Boston and Uhr argued the Hawke Government initially 'adopted a "cautious" approach to economic and public sector administrative improvements' (1996: 61). Dunleavy and O'Leary (1987), Halligan and Power (1992), Self (1993), Kelly (1994), Savoie (1994), Stretton and Orchard (1994), Offe (1996) and Boston and Uhr (1996) noted that the Labor Government endorsed the NPM primarily through six methods. One significant method involved the downsizing of the Australian Public

Service (APS), which was required to apply private sector business management techniques, including performance contract arrangements in an effort to increase efficiency. 'While not changing the fundamental structural model of the APS, the Labor Government on several occasions during its time in office undertook major changes to the machinery of government' (Johnston, 2000: 350). As Johnston explained, the 'machinery of government changes included mergers, [agency] deletions and the creation of new entities intended to support the government's comprehensive macro- and micro- economic agendas' which strengthened 'government's direct control over policy and service provision' (2000: 350). In 1996, the Keating government was voted out and a conservative Liberal National Party Coalition Government was elected. Led by Prime Minister Howard, this government extended PNPM across a range of portfolios and policies including foreign relations, trade and industrial relations (Johnston, 2000). It also increased the downsizing of the APS (Barrett, 2000; Singleton, 2000). As Johnston stated, during its first two years in office, the Howard Government 'downsized the APS by approximately 14,000 personnel' and aimed to increase structural change by transforming the APS by privatising its core functions (2000: 358).

In addition, according to Halligan (2007), during the 2000s, the Howard government promoted an integrated and performance governance model comprised of four components, including: the resurrection of the central agency as a major actor with more control over departments; central monitoring of agency implementation and delivery; whole-of-government as the expression of a range of forms of co-ordination; and control of non-departmental bodies by absorbing them or rationalising corporate governance. Halligan explained that this model had several dimensions, each embodying several recurrent themes, notably, 'delivery and implementation, coherence, whole-of-government and performance and responsiveness to government policy' (2007: 47). Therefore, 'rather than emphasising the individual agency,'

there was a 'concern with cross-agency programmes and relationships' (Halligan, 2007: 47). Simultaneously, vertical relationships were reinforced and significantly extended (Halligan, 2007). According to Halligan, it appeared that each dimension of change was underpinned by a focus on:

improved financial information on a programme basis for Ministers; strategic coordination by Cabinet; control over major policy agendas; organisational integration through abolition of bodies; and monitoring implementation of government policy down to the delivery level (Halligan, 2007: 47).

In this regard, departments and agencies were expected to identify both outcomes and outputs where agency heads were clearly assigned responsibility and accountability for performance (Halligan, 2007; Boston, 2010). Post New Public Management practice had therefore changed the nature of professional careers within the public service. Reporting occurred through budget plans, also known as portfolio budget statements and financial year results through annual reports. In addition, according to Halligan:

cultural change was promoted around a project management approach employing a methodology designed to codify and think through the connections between policy objectives, inputs, outputs and outcomes, to expose underlying assumptions and to question and clarify risks and results (Halligan, 2007: 56).

The NSW Public Service Commission extended this evaluation to include surveying employees and agencies and 'scrutinising the institutionalisation of values in public service organisations as part of the greater need to focus on evaluation and quality assurance' (Halligan, 2007: 56),

a point for which this thesis will soon return. The next section highlights how the NSW Public Service Commission aimed to implement its values across NSW Public Sector agencies.

The New South Wales Public Service Commission

In March 2011, the conservative NSW Liberal National Coalition was elected after sixteen years of Labor Government in the state. This result, according to Clune and Smith, reflected the immense dissatisfaction with the NSW Labor Government, particularly due to the ‘publicised failures’ of the successive Premierships of Morris Iemma, Nathan Rees and Kristina Keneally (Bongiorno, 2013: 246). Liberal Premier, Barry O’Farrell was elected in 2011 to deliver the Coalition’s policy promises, to ‘restore to the highest levels of impartiality, ability, accountability and leadership in the NSW public service’ (NSW Liberals & Nationals, 2010). In late 2011, the NSW Parliament established the NSW Public Service Commission and its core machinery of governance. *The Public Sector Employment and Management Amendment (Ethics and Public Service Commissioner) Act 2011* created a new statutory officer, the Public Service Commissioner, whose role, as outlined in s3B of the Act, was to promote ‘core values’ for the NSW public sector and to oversee the operation and development of the public sector workforce (Di Francesco, 2013: 391). In other words, the NSW Public Service Commission was introduced ostensibly to address unchecked ministerial power and to further reduce the chance for Ministers, acting through the Head of the Premier’s Department, to ‘have unfettered powers,’ which encouraged the ‘hiring and firing’ of chief executives, or other acts that encouraged senior officials to follow their Ministers from one portfolio to another (Di Francesco, 2013: 392).

Accordingly, the NSW Public Service Commission’s Code of Ethics and Conduct (Public Service Commission, 2019) encompasses four ‘Core Values’ for the NSW Public Sector:

Integrity

- Consider people equally without prejudice or favour.
- Act professionally with honesty, consistency and impartiality.
- Take responsibility for situations, showing leadership and courage.
- Place the public interest over personal interest (Public Service Commission, 2019).

Trust

- Appreciate difference and welcome learning from others.
- Build relationships based on mutual respect.
- Uphold the law, institutions of government and democratic principles.
- Communicate intentions clearly and invite teamwork and collaboration.
- Provide apolitical and non-partisan advice (Public Service Commission, 2019).

Service

- Provide services fairly with a focus on customer needs.
- Be flexible, innovative and reliable in 'Service Delivery.'
- Engage with the Not-for-Profit and business sectors to develop and implement service solutions.
- Focus on quality while maximising service delivery (Public Service Commission, 2019).

Accountability

- Recruit and promote employees on merit.
- Take responsibility for decisions and actions.

- Provide transparency to enable public scrutiny.
- Observe standards for safety (Public Service Commission, 2019).

These ‘Core Values’ are espoused by the agencies for which the NSW Public Service Commission is responsible, including Service NSW, as well as the NSW’s Premier’s Priorities pertaining to its public service workforce. Of relevance to this thesis are the collective efforts of the NSW Public Service Commission and how culture has been shaped in the broader context of the NSW Public Sector. According to the State of the NSW Public Sector Report:

The culture of a workplace can be thought of as its personality – made up of the shared beliefs, assumptions and values that guide how employees think and behave at work ... a strong, positive workplace culture is one in which customer service, initiative, individual responsibility and achieving positive outcomes are strongly valued (State of the NSW Public Sector Report, 2019).

The management of ‘culture’ in the public service is one of the primary responsibilities of the NSW Public Service Commission. In line with the NSW Premier’s Priorities, the NSW Public Service Commission is responsible for the state of its public servants who must broadly seek more efficient, innovative and cost-effective ways for delivering services to its customers. To achieve this, using a cluster model, NSW agencies may receive a pool of funding from which their services are delivered in order to resolve a strategic or multifaceted issue.

The descriptive context above concerning the establishment of the NSW Public Service Commission and its focus on the management of ‘culture’ across government agencies, notably Service NSW provides the foundation for analysing the management of its ‘DNA’ culture. This culture can be viewed in terms of Meyerson and Martin’s (1987) integrationist perspective as

will be explained in detail in following chapters. To briefly discuss how ‘culture’ is assessed within the NSW public sector, the NSW Public Service Commission utilises the People Matters Survey, a scale that measures performance management and employee engagement across a range of criteria including employee perceptions of organisational management.

The People Matters Survey is administered to all employees including the Service Delivery team who offer Frontline services. Frontline employees are responsible for offering the organisation’s solutions that reduce administrative costs and re-engineer agency processes to make them more consumer friendly, including through digital transformation. This has also required agencies to amalgamate certain processing functions on a cluster or cross sector basis to meet client and customer needs. To this end, the NSW Government has amalgamated non-core support services, sharing overheads and systems development costs. Agencies have eliminated duplication to obtain significant cost savings. NSW Government agencies have also adopted information technology to provide new efficiencies harnessing the internet to provide a range of government services that simplify transactions. Whole of government initiatives refers to the joint activities performed by Ministries, Public Administrations and Public Agencies to provide better service for customers and to make them reflect people’s needs rather than bureaucratic structures (Vincent, 1999). Whole of government initiatives have, therefore, brought renewed acceptance of the efficiencies to be gained by centralised coordination in key areas (Vincent, 1999). Information technology has been a crucial enabler for shared and integrated services in Service NSW as it permits customer transactions to be accessed electronically, including through ‘one stop shops’ that provide a single access point for a range of services and government agencies (Service NSW, 2012-13). These new technologies allow the NSW Government to take advantage of e-commerce opportunities and to facilitate full and secure data exchange. In addition, cross-agency collaboration encourages multifaceted, holistic

solutions and increased awareness of the impact of their decisions on other agencies. Therefore, solutions to problems in many areas has resulted in the NSW Public Sector, through its cluster agencies, ‘to adopt a new role as facilitator, broker or coordinator of services, rather than as sole service providers’ (Kruk & Bastaja, 2002: 67). This thesis is primarily concerned with the cluster agencies that belong to the Department of Customer Service, specifically, Service NSW.

The Department of Customer Service

In 2019, the NSW Department of Customer Service was established following a Machinery of Government (MoG) announcement by the Minister for Customer Service, Victor Dominello and the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation, Kevin Anderson. As Victor Dominello stated:

The NSW Digital Government Strategy set out a bold vision: services which are digital by default, co-designed with customers and put data at the heart of decision making ... This year, we formed the Department of Customer Service, established the Delivery and Performance Committee of Cabinet and started work on the Digital Restart Fund. All three share a common vision: making government more agile, responsive and accountable for the services we deliver to and on behalf of the people of NSW (State of NSW, 2019).

The Department of Customer Service includes Digital NSW, the Office of the Customer Service Commissioner, the NSW Data Analytics Centre and the Behavioural Insights Unit. To reduce costs as assigned by the NSW Treasury, Corporate Services, including People and Culture, Human Resource Business Partners, Talent and Diversity functions from various agencies within the cluster, including Service NSW were moved into the Department of

Corporate Services in the newly created Department of Customer Service. In this context, the People and Culture Division was required to achieve a budget saving of 35% to the tune of \$5.373 million and to reduce executive teams from 11 to 6. The resulting merger of all support services across Service NSW saw a number of duplicate roles and responsibilities combined into the same teams. Changes took place within cluster agencies as a result of the restructure of the Organisation Development (OD) Division. This restructure sought to improve processes and structures relating to Human Relations, including, Performance Management, Talent Management, Diversity and Employee Wellness. The Department of Customer Service restructure aimed to align the function, roles and responsibilities to cluster-wide strategic plans and ensured that functional teams focus on clear strategic outcomes (Service NSW, 2019).

Under the new Department of Customer Service organisational structure, the Secretary, Emma Hogan became responsible for a number of key functional divisions, including the Department of Corporate Services. This position covers several key organisational functions, including the Deputy Secretary Corporate Services, the Chief People Officer Organisational Capability Design and Development, Payroll (outsourced), Human Resource Systems, including Human Resource Business Partners (HRBP), Management and Support, Employee Safety and Wellbeing, Employee Relations, Industrial Relations, Workforce Analytics, Workforce Planning, Diversity and Inclusion, Policy Management and Talent Management. According to structural changes and announcements made, Emma Hogan now has direct oversight and responsibility for the management of the Department of Customer Service culture, as well as the cultures across the Department of Customer Service cluster agencies, including Service NSW. Such direct oversight fulfils the need to ensure that Service NSW's 'unique culture' could be maintained after the Department of Customer Service restructure

and to enable its 'DNA' culture to influence other customer service agencies in the cluster (Interview with Peter on 2nd July, 2020).

According to the Service NSW Restructure Management Plan (RMP), the objectives aimed to achieve an agile OD function that consistently met client and stakeholder expectations, including the ability to respond to escalated queries and requests which required specialised knowledge. They also aimed to provide Human Resource Business Partner teams (HRBP) and associated divisions with thought leadership, insights and feedback on relevant trends and insights from across the organisation, combined with additional hands-on support (Service 2019-20).

Table 1. Organisational Chart - Service NSW People and Culture Division Pre-Merger with Department of Customer Service

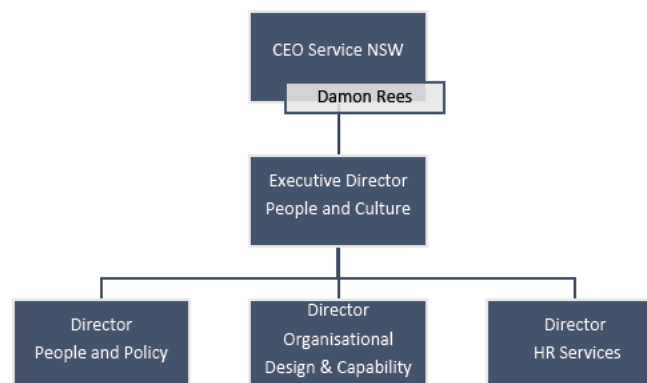
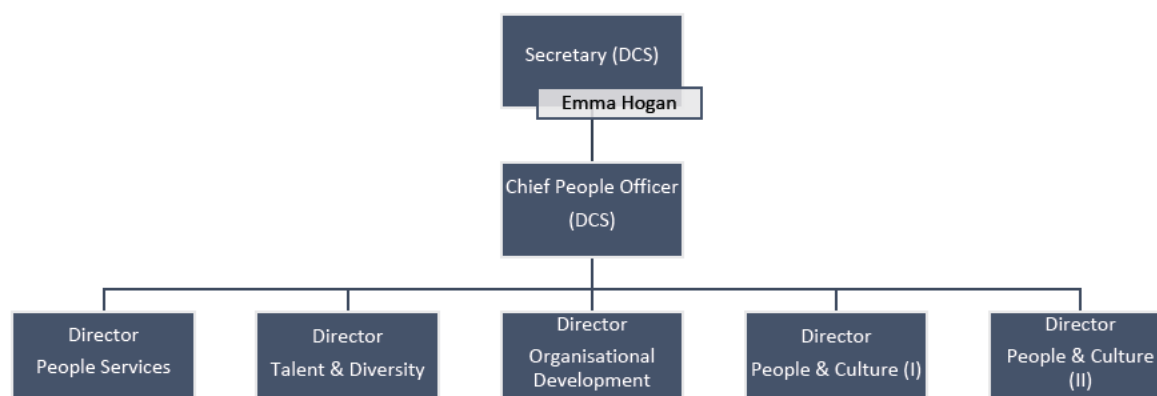


Table 2. Organisational Chart Department of Customer Service Proposed Organisational Development Function with Cluster Agencies



The creation of the Department of Customer Service was expected to cause only minimal disruption to the delivery of services, with the retention of existing employees as the highest priority. This process sought to maximise opportunities for employee matching and transfer, as well as to provide regular, open consultation with staff and trade unions whilst adhering to public sector policy and legislation, notably, the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*. Staff transfers were, therefore, affected under the terms of the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (GSE Act) and *Government Sector Employment (General) Rule 2014* (GSE Rules) provisions (Section 64, Rules 29 Part 6) which required matching of ongoing staff members to vacant roles within the Department of Customer Service through direct identification or an internal assessment process. The Department of Customer Service then issued a letter of offer to staff members that outlined new employment conditions and salaries. Under the *Government Sector Employment Act* (Section 64(3)) and *Government Sector Employment Rules* (Rule 29(2)), staff members were required to agree to any reduction in salary and were given a ten-day notice period to mount any arguments against the proposed transfer. The Department of Customer Service claimed that under this transition plan, staff would be directly assigned into roles with minimal change to functions performed. Where all identified roles included in the structure were unable to be filled through the three previous stages of the internal mobility program, an external recruitment

process was implemented. Employees who were declared ‘excess,’ that is, where they could no longer reasonably expect to be appointed to a role within the new structure, were managed in accordance with the *Managing Excess Employee Guidelines (D2011 007)* and the *Managing Excess Employees Policy (August 2011)*. Those employees received a letter notifying them of their status and options, which included either a redundancy and or an option for redeployment. Employees were given two weeks to decide between those options. Staff affected by the RMP were also given the option to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for an early exit rather than participating in the placement processes. EOIs were considered by the Department of Customer Service People and Culture Executive team on a case-by-case basis.

It was claimed that the restructure adopted fair, transparent and accountable processes and that it provided appropriate information and support mechanisms for staff to assist their understanding of the transition and to keep employees informed on progress made by delivering briefings and information sessions which were conducted by the People and Culture Executive Leadership Team. The Department of Customer Service stated its commitment to providing comprehensive support to Service NSW staff impacted by the change as part of its Restructure Management Plan. In addition, the support program for staff impacted by the change included an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) as well as telephone and face to face confidential counselling to both staff and their immediate families.

Service NSW

In July 2012, Australia’s first Customer Service Commissioner, Michael Pratt, was appointed by the NSW Premier to oversee the creation of Service NSW (Service NSW, 2012-13). A Transformation Steering Committee was formed and composed of senior executives from partner agencies whose members guided the strategic direction of Service NSW. The agency

was officially created on the 18^h March 2013 by the Public Sector Employment and Management Division (Service NSW Division), as a special employment division of the Government Service with the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC). Service NSW was transferred from the DPC on 14^h June 2013 and was recognised as an executive agency under NSW Treasury in Schedule 1 of the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*. A CEO was appointed as the agency head and in July 2014, Service NSW was transferred to the Treasury and Finance cluster (Service NSW, 2013-14).

As a Not-For-Profit (NFP) government agency, Service NSW elaborated a vision to be the leader in the transactional services for the NSW community, with its mission being to transform transactional services through excellent customer service, delivery of effective partnerships and simplification of the way customers do business with government by transforming the customer's experience through excellent quality service at an optimal cost to service (Service NSW, 2012-13). According to Service NSW, it delivers the NSW Premier's Priorities and NSW State Priorities of improving government services to the residents of NSW and it:

is committed to leading a transformation in customer service delivery in NSW. Service NSW has been shaped by what citizens have told the NSW government – they want a better customer service experience through easier and seamless access to government services, a single point of contact and availability of service at times that suit them. Delivering on the NSW Governments plan to make NSW number one (Goals 30, 31 and 32) (Service NSW, 2012-13).

During 2012, in line with the NSW Premier's Priorities, 'A Plan to Make NSW Number One,' then NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell sought to restore accountability to government through three specific goals as stated below (NSW Goals, 2021):

Goal 30: Restore Trust in State and Local Government as a Service

Provider

Essential to a strong democracy is government that is accountable to its citizens. A professional independent ‘Westminster style’ public service is the foundation on which to build a strong customer service culture with the confidence to innovate. We will support our public sector to become a world leader and an employer of choice, delivering the high quality and diverse services the people of NSW expect and deserve (NSW Goals, 2021: 57).

Goal 31: Government Transparency by Increasing Access to Government Information

The community has the right to openness, accountability and transparency when it comes to government decision making and information. Greater public access fosters collaboration, increases efficiency and fosters a public sector that values and shares information. At the same time, it is important to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to protect privacy and confidentiality. We want to improve proactive disclosure of information, make it easier to access information online and make real time information available when it is needed. Providing people with access to information leads to improved community decision making and greater trust in public institutions (NSW Goals, 2021: 58).

Goal 32: Involve the Community in Decision Making on Government

Policy, Services and Projects

We will increase opportunities for people to participate in the way government makes decisions, including ways for people to have a real say and be involved in localised

decision making, including through local government. By devolving decision making as close as possible to the people and places affected by decisions, people are able to take more control over their choices and opportunities and shape their own futures (NSW Goals, 2021: 59).

The establishment of Service NSW provided the means for enacting these goals through its organisational structure, its service delivery platforms, its transaction offerings, its stakeholder engagements, its social impact efforts and most crucially, the management of its ‘DNA’ culture in the public domain. As one participant stated:

The customer satisfaction level in NSW was very low, both from a consumer and business lens. It was benchmarked against other jurisdictions ... NSW rated last ... One aspect was to improve the level of customer satisfaction for consumers and businesses ... What does Virgin do? What does Apple Do? What does Disney Do? ... The second level was employee engagement ... We recruited staff from Roads and Maritime Services ... We wanted to make sure that when you join us, you have a passion for the customer and you want to be part of the values ... If you don’t like serving customers, whether you’re in HR or the Frontline, you are not going to be a fit for us. There are other roles in government for you ... It’s not Service NSW (Interview with Peter on 2nd July, 2020).

The following account of Service NSW provides the context for the empirical data which is presented in subsequent chapters.

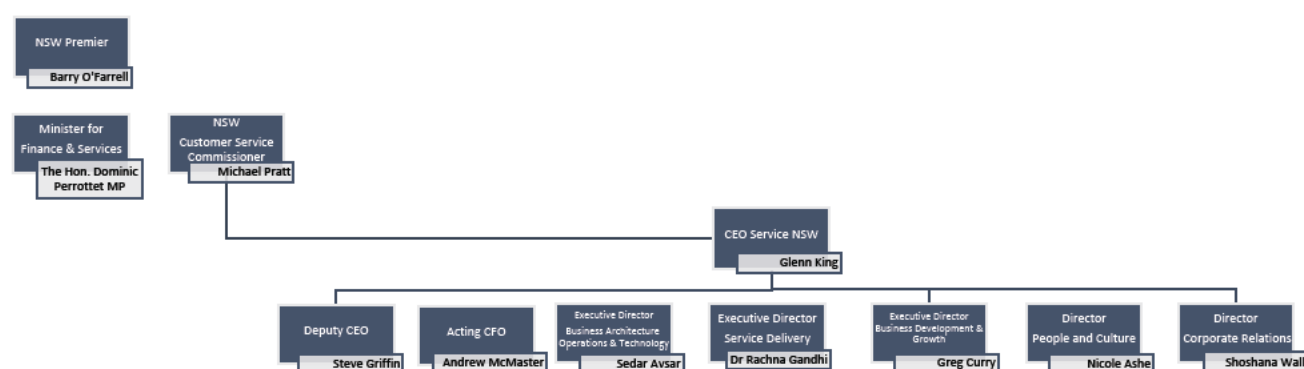
Organisational Structure

In 2012, the Customer Service Commissioner for NSW was responsible for leading the strategic direction of Service NSW. Michael Pratt, Commissioner at that time, sponsored the creation of the Service NSW Corporate DNA, including Service NSW's vision, mission and values and chaired the Transactional Services Corporation. In line with Post New Public Management practice, professionals from private enterprise were appointed. Glenn King, a senior executive at National Australia Bank was recruited to be Service NSW's first CEO. King commenced the whole of government customer reform program, chaired the Program Control Group (PCG), created Service NSW as a new employment entity with its own Industrial Award Instrument and delivered a 24/7 telephone service and was responsible for the delivery of the Service NSW website. Under his leadership, the Service Centre rollout program began with Kiama, a small town on the NSW south coast with a further eight Service Centres established by end of October 2013. During this time, King also appointed a range of personnel from the private sector, predominately from the banking and finance industry, who had 'diverse skills' and 'professionally linked experiences' in order to support the growth of Service NSW. Included among them was Deputy CEO, Steve Griffin, who prepared and led the business case submissions for the creation of Service NSW and led the framework for the Corporate DNA, including Service NSW's vision, mission and values and who led the project team during the critical start-up phase (Service NSW, 2012-13).

In August 2013, Sharyn Gordon was recruited from Westpac Bank where she had been the State General Manager of Queensland. As the new Executive Director for Service Delivery, Gordon was responsible for project planning and delivery of the Service NSW website, Service Centres and telephone services. Gordon also led the recruitment of the service delivery leadership group, including the managers of the Service Centres. James Norfor was appointed

the Executive Director for Procurement, with the responsibility for the establishment of stakeholder relationships as well as the management of contractual and commercial arrangements for Service NSW. Sedar Avsar was appointed as the Executive Director for Business Architecture, Operations and Technology which included managing change programs, analytic customer relationship management, customer value proposition development and customer experience design and development. Andrew McMaster was appointed as the acting Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and was responsible for establishing financial control structures and all aspects of financial management.

Table 3. Organisational Chart Service NSW Start Up Executive Leadership Team (2012-14)



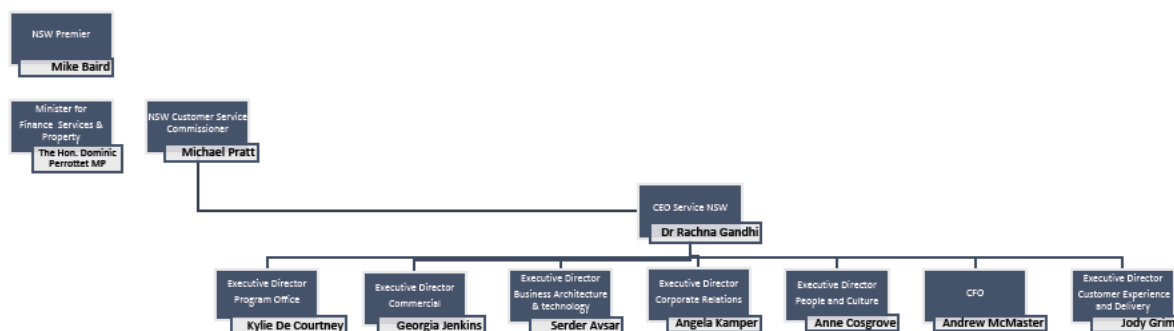
During 2013-14, the Executive Leadership Team changed. Apart from the stable leadership of Glenn King, Sedar Avsar and Ander McMaster, new additions included Dr Rachna Gandhi who had been the Director of Strategy at Westpac and took over from Sharyn Gordon as the Executive Director for Service Delivery in January 2014. Dr Gandhi led transformation programs that embedded the Service NSW customer centric culture and improved service delivery and performance. Greg Curry was appointed in July 2014 as the Executive Director

for Business Development and Growth. With these changes, the Executive Leadership Team appeared to stabilise.

In 2014, then NSW Premier Mike Baird announced a new direction for government services with the appointment of the NSW Customer Advisory Board in May. The Board's primary mission was to provide strategic direction and expertise and dialogue between management and customers. The Chair of the Board was the NSW Customer Service Commissioner, Michael Pratt. Other members included Virgin Australia Airlines CEO, John Borghetti; Microsoft Australia Managing Director, Pip Marlow; NSW Business Chamber CEO Stephen Cartwright; Leighton Holdings Chief Human Resources Officer Dharma Chandran; Service NSW CEO Glenn King; NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet Secretary, Blair Comley (succeeding A/Secretary Simon Smith); NSW Treasury Secretary Phillip Gaetjens; and Family and Community Services Secretary, Michael Coutts-Trotter (Service NSW, 2013-14; 2014-15).

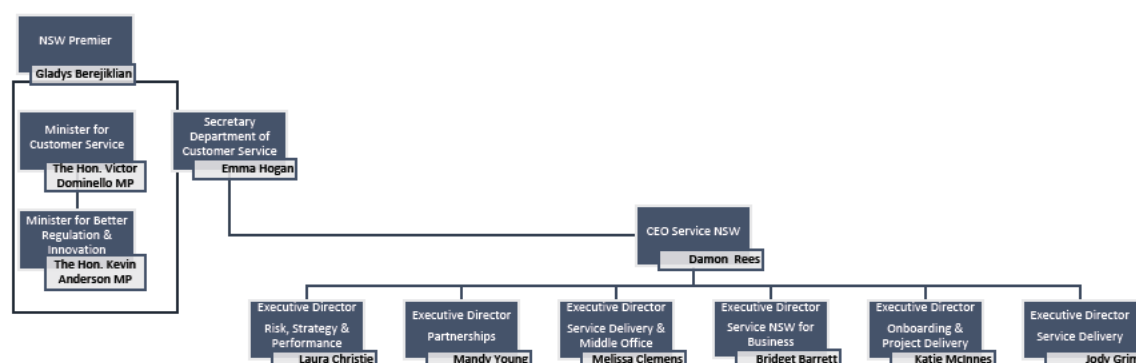
However, during 2016, a significant change in leadership occurred following the departure of then, CEO Glenn King. As a result of this leadership change Dr Gandhi became the first female CEO of Service NSW. During Dr Gandhi's tenure, there were more women employed in the Executive Leadership Team, including Georgia Jenkins, who was appointed as the Executive Director for Commercial, Jody Grima who was appointed from the Department of Family and Community Services to the Executive Director for Customer Experience and Delivery, Anne Cosgrove as the Executive Director for People and Culture, Angela Kamper as the Executive Director for Corporate Relations and Kylie De Courtney who was appointed in a newly created role as the Executive Director for the Program Office whose title changed in 2017 to 'Chief Customer Officer' (Service NSW, 2014-15; 2015-16; 2017).

Table 4. Organisational Chart - Service NSW Executive Leadership Team Under Dr Rachna Gandhi (2015-17)



In 2017, Dr Rachna Gandhi was succeeded by the current Service NSW CEO, Damon Rees. After this transition, the Executive Leadership Team again appeared to stabilise with only one newly created role filled by Glen Einsidel as the acting Executive Director for Business Architecture and Technology. In 2018, Christopher Brennan was appointed the new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Ian Jansen filled the newly created role of Chief Digital Product Officer. Later, another new role created was the Executive Director for Onboarding and Project Delivery filled by Katherine McInnes. In 2019, only minor changes were made to the Executive Leadership Team including the appointment of Tom Kearney as acting Executive Director Partnerships, Chris Fechner who took on the role as the Chief Digital and Product Officer and Matt Conrow who was appointed as the new CFO (Service NSW, 2017; 2018). The following organisational chart depicts the current Service NSW leadership hierarchy.

Table 5. Organisational Chart - Service NSW Executive Directors (2019-20)



Service NSW head office is based in the McKell Building in Sydney's central Haymarket district. In 2020, Service NSW employed approximately 3,200 staff across the state of NSW, 400 of whom were employed at three Sydney Head Office locations, including Queens Square Museum Barracks, Wynyard Station and the Haymarket McKell Building, which is the largest of all three Service NSW sites (Service NSW, 2019-20). From April 2020, all Service NSW staff were to be transferred to the McKell Building in alignment with the Department of Customer Service priorities.

A Brief History: The Service NSW Customer Centric Ethos

Service NSW's customer centric ethos was, and continues to be a major driving source of its reputation for its customers, the collective NSW public sector and other industry constituents. This section outlines how Service NSW crafted and executed a managerial ideology 'our goal is to put the customer at the heart' (Service NSW, 2012-13; 2014-15; 2016). This included the development of increased key agency partnerships by Service NSW in order to deliver a greater number of services across NSW and four primary service groups to provide customers with transactional options for service. The process commenced by conducting an assessment

concerning the perceived inadequacies of the 300 NSW front facing government agencies prior to the establishment of Service NSW as a one-stop-shop. As one participant put it:

There were about 300 shopfronts ... Roads and Maritime Services, Roads and Traffic Authority, Fair Trading, Births Deaths and Marriages all had shop fronts providing transactional services ... Then you had 8000 different phone numbers ... The hours were different and the experience was very mixed. The NSW government had hundreds of websites ... it certainly was not digital. To find a website to do a transaction was difficult. Some websites went to the road of nowhere ... You had citizens and SMEs wanting to do things digitally, but couldn't do it ... It was a horrific experience. By the time someone finally got served, they were aggravated (Interview with Peter on 2nd July, 2020).

In alignment with the NSW Premier's Goals of 2012, the operationalisation of Service NSW included direct consultation with customers. Therefore, amalgamating the 300 NSW government agency shop fronts under the 'One-Stop-Shop' of Service NSW was one of the primary priorities followed by a highly detailed and managed customer centric model of culture. From this perspective, the Executive Directors of Service NSW began to search for customer centric organisations as exemplars to be drawn on during the design phase of the Service Centres. One participant recalls the experience by saying:

We got the citizens of NSW to help us design it. We called it 'Customer Insight'... That doesn't appear radical now because that's what you do when you're running a customer orientated organisation. But for the NSW Government, it never had a Customer Service Commissioner ... It was all designed for comfort ... We got the citizens to come

in and experience it and tell us what they thought. Citizens helped design the front page of the website ... Then we created one phone number 13 77 88. We wanted to avoid an IVR system where you hit one, two, three ... by the time you speak to someone you've lost the will to live ... The point was, no customer went home without a solution ... you get greeted at the door by a concierge, by a smiling, happy and energetic face. You might be annoyed because the government has made you come in to do x, y and z, but at least you've been served with a smile ... There was nothing we couldn't do (Interview with Peter on 2nd July, 2020).

Operations commenced in August 2012 with an approved blueprint of Service NSW and the mapping of agency transactions began along with a range of procurement tenders for technology, systems and the adoption of a corporate wardrobe. In September 2012, over seventy roadshow presentations were conducted across NSW. Concurrently, work began on developing and deploying the Service NSW 'DNA' culture as well as on the Service Centre design. In January 2013, the business architecture and mapping of more than 800 transactions and services were finalised and pilot Service Centre sites in regional NSW were opened. In April 2013, the Service NSW (Salaries and Conditions of Employment) Interim Determination 2013 came into effect and a concept store at Haymarket was opened and tested by staff and customers. In June 2013, the 'One-Stop Access to Government Services' Act was passed by the NSW Legislative Assembly. Also, during June 2013, the Service NSW website underwent final testing and training began for staff of the telephone service and the functions of Service NSW were transferred from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, corporate policies and procedures, including the Service NSW DNA Code of Conduct. In July 2013, the 24/7 telephone service and website were launched. By October 2013, nine Service Centres were

opened across NSW, including Kiama, Haymarket, Tweed Heads, Orange, Dubbo, Tamworth, Parramatta, Wynyrd and Gosford (Service NSW, 2013-14).

In 2016, in alignment with neoliberal ideology and Post New Public Management practice and initiating ‘whole-of-government’ priorities, the NSW Government established a Transactional Services Board to approve agency plans and proposals for investment in physical and digital distribution of transaction services through Service NSW. The Board’s key objectives were to:

- work with agencies to identify future needs for physical or digital distribution of transaction services, review proposed agency expenditure (capital or recurrent) on physical and digital distribution of transaction services and assess suitability of using Service NSW (Service NSW, 2012-13).
- apply reasonable and appropriate industry benchmarks to verify agency baseline costs for transactions to be on-boarded by Service NSW (Service NSW, 2012-13).
- oversee the benefits realisation model of the Service NSW initiative on a whole-of-government basis, including the transition of on-boarding agencies to an agreed cost and funding model (Service NSW, 2015-16; 2019-20).

Agency Partnerships

As a result of the Transactional Services Board objectives, in 2018-19, Service NSW collaborated with thirty-six partner agencies to deliver approximately 1,200 different transactions and interactions on their behalf. In addition, Service NSW established a

Partnerships Division to provide a central point of contact for partner agencies. In 2020, Service NSW had 63 partner agencies, including:

Justice

Office of Liquor and Gaming; NSW Police; Rural Fire Service; State Emergency Services; Ministry of Police and Emergency Services; Births Deaths and Marriages; Racing NSW; Department of Justice; Sydney Opera House; NSW Art Gallery; and NSW Electoral Commission (Service NSW, 2019-20).

Transport and Infrastructure

Roads; Maritime; Etoll; WestConnex; Transport for NSW; Port Authority; TrainLink; Traffic Management Centre; Point to Point Transport; and Sydney Motorway Corporation (Service NSW, 2019-20).

Family and Community Services

Housing NSW; Office of Children's Guardian; Office of Aging; Multicultural NSW; Families NSW; and Communities NSW (Service NSW, 2019-20).

Education

Department of Education (Service NSW, 2019-20).

Finance, Services and Innovation

NSW Treasury; Fair Trading; Office of State Revenue; Commerce Regulator; SafeWork NSW; ICare NSW; Workcover; Public Works; and Procurement NSW (Service NSW, 2019-20).

Industry, Skills and Regional Development

State Innovation Process Energy; Department of Resources and Energy; Department of Industry Primary Industries; Office of Local Government; Office of NSW Small Business Commissioner; Better Regulation; Study NSW; Participation and Inclusion Directorate; and Value General for NSW (Service NSW, 2019-20).

Premier and Cabinet

Department of Premier and Cabinet (Service NSW, 2019-20).

Planning and Environment

Office of Environment and Heritage; Department of Planning and Environment; Environment Protection Authority; and Sydney Water (Service NSW, 2019-20).

Health

Ministry of Health (Service NSW, 2019-20).

Service Platforms

By acting on behalf of the above agencies, Service NSW delivers services to customers and businesses throughout the network of 106 Service Centres, 32 local government council agencies and 10 self-serve digital kiosks, 4 Mobile Service Centres, a Virtual Contact Centre (VCC) with one single 24/7 phone number, a transactional website and the Service NSW App (Service NSW, 2019-20). Service NSW provides services through four primary Service Groups that were launched from 1st July 2013, notably:

Service Centres: responsible for providing ‘One Stop Access to Government Services’ in various locations covering metro, regional and rural areas in NSW. Approximately 77 of the Service NSW Service Centres are located in rural and regional areas across NSW (Service NSW, 2019-20: 10).

Contact Centres: responsible for providing a single contact phone number for dealing with NSW Government, ensuring that the number is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This enables call-backs for queued callers and call prioritisation which is particularly effective in emergency situations such as bushfires that allows customer service team resources to respond to high volumes of citizen calls (Service NSW, 2019-20: 10).

Virtual Contact Centre: which is a computing cloud-based solution that supports Contact Centre agents in various geographical locations instead of a single physical site (Service NSW, 2019-20: 10).

Digital Delivery: responsible for the provision of the Service NSW web portal which facilitates a single digital point of contact and allows government services to be provided online. The Service NSW website and mobile site allows payment processing as well as a range of information services for transacting with the NSW government. Information includes Service NSW policies, fact sheets and brochures, agency information guides as well as news updates. The Service NSW website also offers ‘LiveChat’ instant messaging to customers (Service NSW, 2019-20: 10). In addition, Digital Delivery is responsible for the MyService NSW online portal and the Service NSW App as highlighted below.

MyServiceNSW: is an online account providing customers with a single profile for online services and transactions. At any time, customers can access a range of services, including viewing personal driver licences, registrations, demerit points and the option to update contact details. The platform also partners with agencies to verify customer's credentials to perform digital transactions (Service NSW, 2019-20: 10).

Service NSW App: is the official free NSW Government app providing customers with 24/7 access to several government services. 'The app allows customers to check and review NSW Government licences, permits and registrations, check and renew NSW driver licences for eligible customers, check and renew registration of vessels and vehicles, view current demerit point balances, view vehicle-related penalty notices and fine details, including photos (if available) and to pay fines' (Service NSW, 2019-20: 10).

Mobile Service Centres: are custom-fitted buses that travel to regional and remote areas of NSW offering customers every major Service NSW transaction and also allows customers to claim rebates. Each bus is scheduled to spend 46 weeks a year on the road providing towns with advanced notice to the community (Service NSW, 2019-20: 10).

Moreover, Service NSW operates a Middle Office function which relieves Service Centre and Call Centre staff from dealing with non-core and non-customer facing tasks. For instance, during the late 2019 and early 2020 NSW bushfires, Service NSW assisted the NSW State Emergency Services by implementing an overflow service to manage simple and non-complex matters. In addition, Service NSW employs a team of Service Delivery Support staff who are

responsible for providing the ongoing implementation and administrative support for the activities of the Service NSW Service Groups (Service NSW, 2019-20).

Service NSW work on the Kaizen principals of continuous improvement. All employees are encouraged to think progressively concerning opportunities that enhance customer service, satisfaction and support. One of the largest measures of success are customer satisfaction scores utilising real-time data. As one participant stated:

One goal was to increase the number of transactions that were digital from 25 percent to 70 percent ... There's more cost saving. Over the counter transactions are \$13 roughly, where as digital is \$1. You save more money for the New South Wales Treasury. We always look at how we can improve real time data in terms of satisfaction scores (Interview with Peter on 2nd July, 2020).

Service NSW continues to evolve its services and products for their customers and has focused on not only making transacting with the NSW government easier, but also offering customer centric solutions that go beyond digital transactions toward consultative solutions. From this perspective, several newer consultative customer centric initiatives materialised since the inception of Service NSW, including the development of increased key agency partnerships by Service NSW in order to deliver a greater number of services, including Digital Transformation to allow customers the convenience of processing their increasingly sophisticated transactions online, the formation of a Social Impact and Frontline Engagement Team to assist a wide range of NSW citizens, including through partnerships with Not-For-Profit organisations and by establishing community stakeholder engagements to deliver helpful customer centric solutions to marginal cohorts, as well as a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) plan to assist marginal

cohorts access government services (Service NSW, 2018; 2019-20). These initiatives function rather dualistically - increasing citizen satisfaction while enhancing the public's perception of the organisation. Each are discussed below.

Digital Transformation

Since July 2014, Service NSW has been responsible for the management and delivery of Driver Testing which was previously managed by Roads and Maritime Services (RMS). Service NSW and the motor registry network manages around 4,500 tests per week in Sydney with a total of up to 7,000 across the state (Service NSW, 2014-15). In 2015, the Making Business Easier Program partnership was established between Service NSW, The NSW Department and Cabinet, Better Regulation and the NSW Small Business Commission that provides step by step guidance to new business owners to assist in navigating through local, state and federal government requirements when starting a business. The program includes a digital platform with a dashboard which helps business owners manage their regulatory obligations and complete or initiate transactions across three levels of government in order to help them keep track of progress. In addition, the digital platform includes 'how to' guides by providing industry specific information in relation to various processes, regulations, timeframes and associated costs (Service NSW, 2015-16).

Service NSW also supports the delivery of the My Community Project initiative by funding projects in each NSW electorate to help improve the wellbeing of people in local communities that live there (Service NSW, 2015-16). In October 2018, The Companion Animals Register was developed in partnership with Service NSW and the Office of Local Government to allow pet owners an alternative way to register their pets. Also, during 2018, Service NSW collaborated with the NSW Police Service to design the Digital Driver's Licence (DDL). This

allows police officers to digitally validate licenses and if needed, suspend a driver licence in real time using MobiPod device (a device that allows police officers to scan the DDL). In April 2019, Service NSW partnered with the NSW Office of Children's Guardian to allow individuals to access their Working with Children Check through the Service NSW mobile app (Service NSW, 2018; 2019).

Social Impact and Community Engagement

In 2016-17, Service NSW developed a Stakeholder Engagement function to support philanthropic, environmental and corporate responsibility programmes. As part of these initiatives, each Service NSW Centre has a budget to engage with the community and to provide tailored information sessions for key community groups, including seniors, school students, multicultural and diversity events as well as undertaking fundraising for charity. Past events have included the support of National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week, O Week and Harmony Day events as well as multicultural festivals. Service NSW Service Centres also undertake regular fundraising for key charities, including the Leukemia Foundation and Veterans 360. In addition, Service NSW participate in a range of local, state and national fundraising events for causes including: Homelessness Connect Day; Beyond Blue; Pink Ribbon Day; and Jersey Day, also known as Footy Colours Day (Service NSW, 2017; 2018; 2019, 2019-20).

Moreover, Service NSW partners with Dress for Success, a registered charity for the purposes of helping, among others, women who are from rural regions, refugees, migrants, unemployed, older divorced women with no superannuation, prisoners being released, early school leavers and drought affected women. In addition, in July 2018, Service NSW launched the Cost of Living (CoL) program which enables customers to access and apply for NSW Government

rebates and savings via an online savings finder. Rebate providers include Toll Relief, Active Kids, Creative Kids and Energy Switch. The Energy Switch tool was launched in June 2019 allowing customers to compare against every energy retailer in NSW by displaying the best priced electricity or gas plans available. Service NSW initiates the switch for customers by informing the energy provider of the switch request (Service NSW, 2017; 2018; 2019).

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

Service NSW recognises that Australia is one of the most diverse and multicultural countries in the world with more than 28% of the population born overseas (ABS, 2016). More than 300 languages are spoken in Australian homes and Australian identity reflects a similar number of ancestries (ABS, 2012a, 2012b). Service NSW's public management of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI), therefore, appears to be an important imperative to Service NSW's corporate cultural image.

In October 2014, Service NSW developed its first Multicultural Policies and Services Program Plan (MPSP) for 2014-17 (Service NSW, 2015-16). This whole-of-government responsibility is overseen by Multicultural NSW, a NSW government agency that leads policy and legislative framework implementation to support multicultural principles in the NSW Public Service, focusing on the implementation of multicultural principles across government agencies through plans which are inclusive for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In 2015-16, Service NSW formed a Multicultural Committee with representatives from a strategic cross-section of the organisation to improve participation and decision-making processes for customers from diverse backgrounds. The Committee's role is to promote the Service NSW Multicultural Plan which recommends, implements and evaluates programs that are aimed at improving access to Service NSW by all community members, including refugees and

humanitarian entrants. The plan supported by Multicultural NSW, was founded upon strategies to build multicultural service delivery through a customer flow management system, offering six languages to assist customers in their visits at Service NSW Service Centres and through the Service NSW website translator services. In addition, a total of 32 languages are spoken across Service NSW Service Centres by team members and transactions can be produced in 6 languages via tickets issued to customers. Further, the Service NSW website promotes Multicultural NSW services offering customer assistance in almost 60 languages. All Service NSW Service Centres, Mobile Service Centres and Contact Centres offer customers free access to language support through staff capability or translation and interpretation services. In addition, a number of Service Centres in Western Sydney offer tailored information sessions to help recently arrived Syrian refugees. Arabic-speaking team members work closely with the DPC and the Assyrian Australian Association to arrange group visits where customers could be talked through documentation, transaction requirements and other services provided by the Service NSW network (Service NSW, 2019).

In addition, Service NSW offers in-store assistance to customers with special access needs. Furniture has been chosen to maximise accessibility, including counters and writing benches that have been lowered to meet legislative requirements. The Service NSW customer flow management system is both visual and auditory with multi-lingual buttons. Staff at Service Centres undergo awareness training to be able to provide an optimum service for customers with disabilities. Furthermore, the Service NSW website is certified as meeting internationally recognised Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. There are also links to the National Relay Service, including Speak and Listen Speech and Speech as well as Telephone Interpreter Services when required. In 2017, Service NSW also introduced in-store and online facilities that assist people with low hearing capability to access services, including hearing loops and

remote live captioning as well as an Auslan (Australian Sign Languages) video remote interpreting service via online video chat. In addition, Service NSW work with local councils to ensure that Service Centres have accessibility parking bays available at all times. Service NSW is also a Silver Member with Australian Network on Disability which is a national membership-based organisation that aims to make it easier for businesses to welcome people with disability. Service NSW attends disability conferences, including the Annual Deaf Festival and provides material outlining what Service NSW do and how they can help people who are deaf or hard of hearing access Service NSW services in both English and Auslan (Service NSW, 2018; 2019).

The aforementioned consultative based solutions position Service NSW as customer centric leader within NSW Government. As a result, Service NSW provide tours for visitors from both international organisations and other Australian government agencies to see how Service NSW and the NSW Government engages with its citizens. Past visitors have included officials from various countries as well as Australian Government entities such as the Civil Aviation Safety Authority and Departments of Education, Health and Transport. Representatives from other state government agencies have visited Service NSW to experience its customer centric culture (Service NSW, 2018; 2019).

Conclusion to Chapter Five

This chapter identified several critical and interconnected contexts pertinent to this thesis in order to introduce the empirical data. The critical contexts elaborated here included an overview of Public Management, New Public Management and Post New Public Management and the neoliberal ideology that has informed the approach to public sector management since the 1980s. Neoliberal ideology and Post New Public Management underpins the motivation

for establishing Service NSW and its formulated customer centric, 'DNA' culture. Post New Public Management policy also provides the critical context for analysing the decision to establish the NSW Public Service Commission, as well as important changes that occurred in 2018-19 with the establishment of the Department of Customer Service and the amalgamation of the Shared Corporate Services function between the Department of Customer Service, Service NSW and other government agencies within the cluster.

The focus of this chapter contained varieties of publicly available documents that were utilised as resources to describe the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. A detailed chronology of Service NSW was presented from its establishment in 2012-13 by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, which included an overview of its organisational structure. The chronological context is significant for the data presented in the following chapters.

Chapter Six

Sources of Ideological Influence

Introduction

As outlined in Chapter Three, according to Smircich (1983; 1985), organisational culture could be viewed as something an organisation *has* versus something an organisation *is*. This chapter addresses this distinction by focusing on the local nature of cultural processes at the actor level phenomenon (Parker, 2000). As mentioned in Chapter Five, the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture was built upon a customer centric ideology its mantra being, ‘the customer is at the heart of everything we do.’ According to Geertz, ‘ideology is an authoritative system of meaning where “schematic images of social order” publicly proposed by those who claim authority whether politically, aesthetically, morally or economically endow maps of problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective consciousness’ (1973: 220). From Geertz’s perspective, an ideological discourse released through various forms of authority and influence can direct human behaviour. Managerial ideology (Barely & Kunda, 1992), often exercised through normative control and the management of an organisation’s culture can have an impact on staff members’ sense of self consciousness. In other words, internalising an ideology can make heavy claims against the self (Kunda, 2009), not only in the workplace but also away from it (Interview with Josephine on 17th September, 2020).

The first part of this chapter outlines the continuous efforts made by Service NSW to create an authoritative system of meaning. In this regard, attention focuses on those who possess sufficient authority to purvey the organisation’s customer centric ideology, notably, State Officials, including the NSW Premier, the Minister for Customer Service, the Secretary for the Department of Customer Service and the organisation’s Executive Leaders whose ideological

influence relates to their degree of visibility, proximity and familiarity to the staff members of the organisation. The second part of this chapter discusses the organisation's Start-Up Executive Leadership Team, including key ideological influencers who created a narrative of customer centric cultural consensus to promulgate the integrationist perspective (Meyerson & Martin, 1987) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. Finally, in alignment with neoliberal ideology and the practice of Post New Public Management, the third part of this chapter highlights the role the organisation's customers play as ideological sources of influence. The chapter begins with a discussion that outlines the organisation's strongest ideological sources of authority, notably, State Officials and how these sources disseminate their messages to their subjects and, therefore, use normative control in ways that make claims upon the subjective experience of staff members.

Sources of Ideological Influence

At Service NSW, there are both strong sources of ideological influence and purveyors of the organisation's ideology. As outlined in Chapter Five, the practice of Post New Public Management (PNPM) and implicitly, the neoliberal ideology underpinning it, provides the main source of ideological authority for the State's Officials, such as the NSW Premier, the Minister for Customer Service and the Secretary for the Department of Customer Service. In addition, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), including the Service NSW CEO and the Executive Director for Service Delivery are important sources of ideological influence. In this regard, it is important to recognise that the original start-up Service NSW Executive Leadership Team along with long serving employees, notably, those who were originally employed by Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and who transferred to Service NSW as part of its start-up team, provided an important and foundational source of ideological influence prior to their departure from the organisation (Interviews with: Jane on 10th September, 2020; James on 11th

September, 2020; and Timothy on 1^s October, 2020). This strong ideological legacy was largely attributable to the work of two prominent CEO's and the previous Service NSW People and Culture Executive Director prior to the establishment of the Department of Customer Service and the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model.

However, not all of these sources hold equal weight in terms of their ideological influence. As Geertz noted, ideological influence depends on a person's level of authority and their capacity to create 'schematic images of social order' (1973: 220). As the data in this chapter will show, in Service NSW, the level of ideological influence an agent of normative control has upon the subjective experience of staff members relates directly to their degree of visibility, proximity, and familiarity to staff members and how social order is enforced, reinforced or re-formed by them. The other method used for promoting the organisation's ideology across its membership groups, which will be outlined in Chapter Nine in line with the integrationist perspective (Meyerson & Martin, 1987) includes the various brochures, policies and procedures, Human Resources and training schedules, notably, the Service NSW 'DNA' and the Service NSW Code of Conduct that convey and promote the Service NSW 'DNA' culture.

The final source of ideological influence is provided by the customers of Service NSW who are called upon to provide feedback to the organisation's Frontline employees in relation to their customer service experiences. This feedback is used by the organisation's various sources of authority to propel its 'unique' image to its employees, to other government agencies and indeed, to its customers through annual reports, media announcements of various sorts and other publicly available documents. The discussion now turns to an analysis of the State Officials who are the key source of ideological influence.

State Officials

As mentioned in Chapter Five, in his capacity as Premier of NSW, Barry O'Farrell initiated the creation of Service NSW in order to deliver a commitment to the NSW public by introducing the One-Stop-Shop initiative to make service transactions with the government easy. The Premier of NSW from January 2017 until October 2021, Gladys Berejiklian, continued to build upon her predecessors' efforts by delivering a 'Better Customer Service.' The Premier's key priorities represent a commitment by the NSW government to enhance the quality of life for the people of NSW. One key priority for the Premier was 'putting the customer at the centre of everything we do' and that 'great progress' had been made through the 'passion and energy of our Frontline staff' (NSW Government, A).

There are two key priorities that underpin the NSW Premier's 'Better Customer Service' objectives: 'Government Made Easy' (NSW Government, B) and delivering a 'World Class Public Service' (NSW Government, C). The 'Tell Us Once' approach underpins the customer priorities relating to the 'Government Made Easy' initiative (NSW Government, D). It is designed to ensure that customers experience improved services by reducing the need to repeat information across a broad range of services, such as everyday transactions during times of change, where assistance is required or during times of crisis. As the NSW Premier stated, 'we have revolutionised customer service through Service NSW, we are delivering improvements to ... social services, no matter who you are or what you need' (NSW Government, E).

The NSW Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, was a prominent and powerful figurehead for all NSW government agencies who exerted ideological influence (Geertz, 1973) and normative control (Kunda, 2009) over Service NSW. Public appearances were common and generally aimed at informing the NSW public through various medias on matters relating to crisis issues,

legislation or other affairs that may concern the citizens of the State. The Premier's media appearances seemed to influence the subjective experience of staff members of the organisation. A middle manager explained this by saying:

She makes you feel part of a family. It's not just because of living in New South Wales, we're all customers at the same time. Even over this last year, just watching the news and knowing that Service NSW was such an integral part of helping everyone through the pandemic. There is that feeling, what's our tagline, 'making it easier' (Interview with Josephine on 17th September, 2020).

Delivering support services that assist the needs of NSW residents through State government agencies becomes especially significant during crises. Hence, the Premier's Office engaged Service NSW during the 2020 bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic to deliver prompt assistance through its Frontline capability and the Service Centres across the State of NSW. Two managers commented on this initiative by saying:

Service NSW has never been in the disaster recovery business before. The Premier says to us, 'what can you do?' They asked us what we could do for the drought, we put together this amazing program and then they went, 'oh wow, you are really good at this.' So here come the bushfires and the government asks us, 'so, what can you do for this?' (Interview with Pauline on 24th March, 2020). We just go, 'yes, whatever you want, we can do.' We're delivering for the government ... We are the trusted partner (Interview with Chelsea on 4th November, 2020).

The NSW Premier, therefore, required the rapid development of support services from State agencies in managing crises events in order to assist NSW residents. In addition, agencies were required to deal with rapid changes when machinery of government announcements were made by the NSW Premier while also preserving operational functionality and Business as Usual (BAU) standards. In these circumstances, government agencies need to concurrently manage internal and external resources, government budgets and expenditures. One Support Office Manager recalled the machinery of government changes and the establishment of the Department of Customer Service when the Shared Corporate Services model was announced by commenting:

The Premier said this is what we are doing and within weeks, it started to happen. I felt we were building the plane as we were flying it. The Premier says, I want X, Y, Z and the Minister tells us on Monday and it'll have to be stood up by the following Monday. We would literally just say, 'ok, how are we going to pull everyone on deck? Everyone' (Interview with Barbara on 14th November, 2020).

The NSW Premier was a strong source of ideological influence (Geertz, 1973). Through the range of activities, such as formally opening new Service Centres with the Minister for Customer Service and collaborating with the Minister for Customer Service in delivering the NSW government's priorities, she promoted a strong customer centric ethos to the broader public via various media platforms. However, her position lacked close proximity to Service NSW staff members with who contact is rare as she did not routinely visit the McKell Building.

One key responsibility for the Minister for Customer Service involves executing the NSW Premier's priorities, notably, the efforts to build a 'Better Customer Service' through the

Department of Customer Service cluster agencies and to specifically ensure the Service Delivery Channels operate as efficiently as possible by delivering digital channel improvements. In this regard, the Minister for Customer Service stated (November, 2019):

This year, we formed the Department of Customer Service, established the Delivery and Performance Committee of Cabinet and started work on the Digital Restart Fund. All three share a common vision: making government more agile, responsive and accountable for the services we deliver to and on behalf of the people of NSW ... No longer is digital government an end goal in itself, but a means to go further and deliver even better government services (NSW Government, F).

An important initiative for the Department of Customer Service, therefore, involves digital transformation. On the ground, these efforts are directly observable at Service Centre outlets where Digital Service Representatives (DSRs) assist NSW customers complete their government transactions through online portals. The Minister for Customer Service is a strong source of ideological influence who uses traditional and social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, to post crafted narratives concerning the department's initiatives successes and its customer centric ethos (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: A). As one Support Office staff member commented, 'The majority of what the Minister posts and what is part of his narrative is actually Service NSW and or the digital piece. You always see Minister Dominello singing our praises, "these guys are amazing, they can get anything done"' (Interview with Inness on 16th November, 2020).

In short, the Minister for the Department of Customer Service is a visible, strong ideological influencer of the customer centric ethos. Nevertheless, as is the case in regard to the NSW

Premier, the Minister for Customer Service lacks close proximity to the daily operations of Service NSW and its staff. By contrast, the Secretary for the Department of Customer Service collaborates closely with both the Minister for Customer Service and the Executive Leadership Team of Service NSW.

The Secretary for the Department of Customer Service, who reports directly to the Minister for Customer Service and the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation was appointed as Secretary in 2020 after having gained public sector experience as the Public Service Commissioner following employment in several private sector organisations. Her position currently oversees approximately 10,000 public servants and is responsible for seven direct reports.

The Secretary is highly visible across the cluster agencies, has proximity to Service NSW staff, and has been depicted as having a ‘down to earth’ (Interview with Cleo on 11^h March, 2020) and ‘authentic’ nature (Interview with Josephine on 17^h September, 2020). In short, she presents herself as being a familiar with other staff members and an authority figure who ‘gets’ employees. One Support Office manager commented:

You can bring your whole self to work and you can have your kids in the office ... The Secretary talks about work life integration and it really is that ... You could ask her anything ... Everybody, man, woman, whatever background seems to adore her because she’s got that level of authenticity ... She’s listening to people. As long as we’ve got our Secretary, we are in good hands (Interview with Vicky on 19^h February, 2020)

The Secretary also works closely with the Service NSW CEO and other Executive Leaders, as well as People and Culture personnel employed by the Department of Customer Service. One recent initiative has been the Secretary's new and improved 'People Strategy' that encompasses three 'Cultural Pillars': Customer and Community at the Centre, People and Inclusion at the Heart, Partner Collaboration at its Best. In this way she has helped to embed the customer centric ethos across the other cluster agencies in the Department of Customer Service. As one participant put it:

Being customer centric is our thing. It's our bag ... Everybody in the division should be able to see themselves in the strategy ... The Department of Customer Service have to influence the whole of government to up their game when it comes to customer centricity ... Now that the structures themselves have settled, we can put the customer truly at the heart (Interview with Coco on 8^h October, 2020).

The Secretary's role in bringing together customer facing components of government has been challenging, particularly during times of machinery of government changes that involve organisational restructures. As one previously employed Executive Leader within Service NSW commented:

We wanted to broaden the success story and really create a whole department with a really strong customer ethos ... People joined Service NSW as a brand, as a start-up. Service NSW brought together people from the RTA, Births Deaths and Marriages, Fair Trading, different government agencies. It's a bit like survivor, they all come from different tribes. You can make anything work conceptually, the detail is in the implementation and execution which is where all strategies and policies often fail ... It's

going to be a challenge for the Secretary, but it's not insurmountable (Interview with Peter on 2nd July, 2020).

The Secretary's ideological authority is based on her familiarity with and conscious exposure to Service NSW staff through routine presentations at various forums, including conferences and roadshows. A Support Office staff member commented on her attendance at the bushfire crisis meeting by saying:

The Secretary herself came down to the project meeting to have a look exactly what the project was and how it was laid out. Minister Dominello came with her and they actually sat down and looked at the 'Sprint Plan' to see how the bushfire project was going to be implemented (Interview with Sam on 28^h October, 2020).

In addition, the Secretary frequently creates video messages and participates in interviews created for dissemination across the Department of Customer Service, including to employees of Service NSW. The content of such videos promulgates the customer centric ethos, particularly pertaining to strategies developed by the Department of Customer Service for all cluster agencies and or projects or initiatives the agency is involved with. In these ways, the Secretary is a strong source of ideological authority for the organisation. In practice, she enforces, reinforces and legitimises neoliberalism and Post New Public Management practice through her words and actions. However, she arguably exerts less ideological influence than the Executive Leaders and Directors of the organisation.

Executive Leaders and Directors

Members of the Executive Leadership Team unanimously promote a very clear and systematic outlook for the organisation. Aside from a State government leadership change that could destabilise the organisation's operations, the fate of Service NSW starts and ends with the decisions made by the Executive Leadership Team. The Executive Leaders decide upon the organisation's goals, its 'Big Rocks.' In this respect, sources of ideological authority have created institutionalised terms that symbolise the development and deployment of the organisation's strategies, in order to manage their direct reports and to influence and guide their various teams on delivering those strategies. All escalations or communication breakdowns that cannot be solved by middle or lower level managers are ultimately handled by the Executive Leadership Team. In short, all business decisions rest on the shoulders of the organisation's executives who speak for the collective interest and, therefore, are the organisation's primary agents of normative control (Kunda, 2009). As such, they create a set of taken for granted assumptions and values in order to prescribe a culture that is designed to elicit employee commitment to the organisation. From this perspective, the Executive Leaders and Directors of Service NSW have power over their staff members to the 'extent' that they can get their employees to do 'something they would not otherwise do' (Ailon, 2006: 776).

The Service NSW CEO is someone who reinforces the customer centric 'culture' and is a key figurehead tasked with the responsibility in 'preserving' and or 'maintaining' the 'DNA' (Interview with Josephine on 17th September, 2020). His strong focus on 'the people' was recognised by two Support Office staff members as commented:

He is the most inclusive leader I have ever known. He always walks up, speaks to you, has a smile on his face. It's genuine openness (Interview with Sam on 28th October,

2020). At our awards night, he was even wearing a shirt covered in guitars, he wasn't even wearing a suit. I feel there's a level of accessibility and authenticity about him (Interview with Josephine on 17^h September, 2020).

A number of interviewees thought that the Service CEO was 'genuine,' a person who demonstrates his 'authenticity' and 'passion' for the organisation by 'focusing on the people' (Interviews with: Sam on 28^h October, 2020; and Leo on 2nd November, 2020) and responds promptly to requests in ways that treat employees of the organisation as his 'customers.' A Support Office staff member recalled, 'our division was struggling with input from technology ... He said "I'll speak to the Executive Director and have someone from technology included in these reviews." Next review, the CTO was there. I have never not seen the CTO being there after that' (Interview with Alistair on 3^d November, 2020).

The Service CEO collaborates closely with his superiors, including the Secretary for the Department of Customer Service and the Department's People and Culture division. One goal of such collaboration is to develop various strategies that positively deliver or improve Business as Usual (BAU) activities as well as to execute and manage strategies for dealing with crises that affect the NSW public in response to directives from the NSW Premier and Minister for Customer Service. Such activities are broadly disseminated across the organisation through various written documents and or recorded video presentations that also formulate and codify the principles for operating under the customer centric ethos. Aside from the CEO's frequent video messages, his office leads an internal program designed to deliver inclusive communication that attempts to 'breaks down silos' while encouraging 'cross-functional collaborative efforts' embedding the 'organisational values' by delivering the organisation's strategies (Service NSW, 2018). A weekly email which features a photoshopped banner of

himself is usually distributed on Fridays. These weekly emails are used for disseminating his personal views on the organisation's recent activities. Below are a few exemplars depicting the style and content of the Service NSW CEO's weekly updates:

For anyone curious about a career in digital, you should know that our digital product teams do truly remarkable work and are amongst the most contemporary, capable and committed to digital teams in Government globally. We look to leading organisations of Silicon Valley to show us what good looks like in this space and we are doing great things for our customer through our adoption of lean, agile, customer centric ways of working. Combined with the rest of Service NSW, they are a big part of the reason we can deliver new services so quickly for customers (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: B).

We have booked two Service NSW tables at the UN international Women's Day breakfast ... Whilst Service NSW already has more than 50 percent all executive leadership held by women, we must all work together to continue to instil a culture of inclusivity across the organisation so every last person in our team is valued and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential at Service NSW ... (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: B).

We already know that you're doing an incredible job out there but there is nothing more important than feedback from the customers we serve. You'll find some terrific customer comments at the end of this email. Whether you are on the Frontline or behind the scenes in our Support Office, please take the time to read them ... (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: B).

Reflecting an integrationist approach to the organisational culture (Martin, 2001), emails from the CEO are carefully crafted, positive in nature and include organisation-wide strategy updates, customer satisfaction scores, successful outcomes regarding partner agency collaborations, culture survey results as well as highlighting the work of exemplar employees. Those employees who are perceived as going ‘above and beyond’ and have worked ‘extended hours’ to ‘get things done’ in line with the customer centric culture are publicly acknowledged across the organisation for their work by the CEO through his emails and other platforms. Indeed, the CEO frequently praises staff for their customer service efforts through Workplace, which is a Facebook Social Media platform similar to Yama that is specifically designed for use by Service NSW employees. One Frontline staff member recalled a comment made by the CEO by saying, ‘he jumps on there and says, “great feedback”’ (Interview with Audrey 10th September, 2020).

Other routine communications distributed by the CEO’s office include a quarterly ‘all staff’ teleconference, the People Leader Forum and various team meetings with staff members of the Executive Leadership Team across the Service NSW network (Service NSW, 2019). In addition, the CEO sometimes also attends ‘DNA’ training sessions. Living the Service NSW DNA is a full day training session which seeks to ensure social and behavioural integration of new staff members who join the organisation. If the CEO is not present, a pre-recorded video is played featuring the CEO, speaking in his authentic, relaxed style about what it means to ‘join Service NSW’ (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: C). If the CEO is present, it is not uncommon for his full immersion in the training session by asking questions, gaining and offering insight and challenging new staff members to think about the customer as their number one priority in their new role. A Training Lead recalled the CEO’s attendance in her DNA session:

When he would do the guest speaker slot for the DNA training, he would encourage people to speak out about their experiences to see where they were at ... He questioned and challenged them in lots of ways, 'but does that work for our customers or just for the business? We need it to work for the business but it has to work for the customers as well. That's what we are trying to do. It might not be the right way the first time, but we are always learning and making things better the next time around' (Interview with Samantha on 9^h December, 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CEO appeared to rely more heavily on other internal sources of ideological influence, specifically, his direct reports to indirectly reinforce the customer centric ethos. As previously mentioned, the level of ideological authority in the organisation depends not only on creating 'schematic images of social order' (Geertz, 1973: 220), but also the degree of visibility, proximity and familiarity with staff members of the organisation that ensure staff feel connected with those who purvey the organisation's ideology and who enforce and reinforce the official social order. A loss of ideological influence on the part of the Service CEO appears to have occurred, particularly amongst the Frontline and managerial staff during the COVID-19 pandemic since he was 'gone' from the 'Frontline' (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020). Nonetheless, the CEO's ideological influence and authority has not been completely undermined because, as one Support Office staff member commented, 'it's like dollars in the emotional bank account, maybe he's got a few in there' (Interview with Jamie on 21st October, 2020).

By contrast, the Executive Director for Service Delivery, a member of the Executive Leadership Team has been able to utilise the pandemic to elevate her level of ideological influence. In this regard, a Senior Leader commented on the Executive Director's increased visibility and

proximity to the Frontline during the pandemic, saying, ‘They see her everywhere now and through different forums ... She's got her “What's Hot Wednesday.” She is doing her Workplace posts’ (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020). Therefore, the Executive Director frequently engages with staff members via various communication platforms. One important platform she frequently engages is called ‘Workplace’ where ‘she posts things that are so human and empathetic’ because ‘that’s what people want, they just want to be heard’ (Interview with Suzie on 3^d November, 2020). In addition, the Executive Director utilises ‘What’s Hot Wednesday’ by inviting Support Office staff members to highlight key activities and achievements. The platform is also utilised by managers to announce formal and informal rewards and thereby recognise both team and individual accomplishments. In short, The Executive Director for Service Delivery has remained in touch with various teams and most noticeably, with the Frontline and thereby exerts normative control through the range of forums she uses to ensure the organisation’s social order is enforced.

In addition, the Executive Director for Service Delivery is a founding member of Service NSW who is responsible for over 2500 staff across 106 Service Centres within the State of NSW. She is also responsible for the Contact Centre network and Mobile Centre Network. She is, therefore, accountable for Support Office staff within Service Delivery who provide resources and services to assist the Frontline staff who directly serve customers. She also has direct lines of communication with prominent State Officials and with the Secretary for the Department of Customer Service. The Executive Director is a visible figurehead and ‘has a lot of pull in what happens around government because her area delivers on everything for the government’ (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020).

As mentioned, The Executive Director for Service Delivery is the most influential ideological influencer in the organisation. One participant commented on the Executive Director's level of commitment, stating, 'She has the best skills from an influencing point of view ... she lives and breathes Service NSW. You absolutely cannot fault her there. Her whole life is consumed with Service NSW, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. She is present' (Interview with Elise on 11^h October, 2020). Her apparent influence across the organisation's various membership groups, in part, is driven by consistent efforts to, as one participant stated, 'be in touch with Frontline teams by having contact with all of the managers across the State of NSW, both in the Contact Centres and the Service Centre channels' (Interview with Anastasia on 19^h October, 2020). This level of visibility also comes with direct payoffs for her reputation. As one Director commented, 'She is in a really good place ... She's got direct connection with senior leaders at the DCS ... She has the biggest voice in the cluster and by voice, I mean, as in an army of people that will sing her praise if needed' (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020).

In reflecting on the Executive Director's hypothetical departure due to the introduction of Department of Customer Service, one Support Office staff member commented, 'It would be really scary ... that's how I'm feeling. I can't imagine how the Frontline staff would feel if I'm feeling that' (Interview with Rhonda on 2nd October, 2020). One central aspect to the Executive Director's level of ideological influence relates to her authentic style. During field work research, it was difficult to discern a status distinction between the Executive Director and the other staff members of the organisation at events where she presented updates to staff members (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: D). A Director explained, 'she has a genuine sense of authenticity' while also being 'highly political' (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020). Another staff member commented, the Executive Director is perceived to be an 'approachable' leader without being 'bureaucratic' (Interview with Elise on 11^h October, 2020).

Both metropolitan and regional Directors for the Service Delivery channel report directly to the Executive Director. The Directors for Service Delivery closely monitor each of the Service Centres through each of the metropolitan and regional managers (RMs) and are responsible for monitoring the outcomes of the managed 'DNA' culture at the Service Centre level. Directors routinely deal with matters that require escalation. Since the establishment of the Department of Customer Service's Shared Corporate Services model and the redundancy of the People and Culture division within Service NSW, any serious issues concerning the 'DNA' culture that cannot be solved by the organisation's Regional Managers and or Directors are escalated to the Executive Director for Service Delivery.

The Executive Leaders and Directors of the organisation, both independently and collectively serve as strong ideological sources of influence for staff members. They enact loyalty to the organisation evident by way of narrative and consistent behavioural displays. They also prescribe and describe the strong customer centric ethos in their own authentic style. Through their promotion of the customer centric ideology, they contribute collectively to the construction of the organisation's social reality, which is positively reinforced on a continuous basis, both deliberately and by default, in the course of day to day working life. Two Support Office staff members explained this phenomenon by saying:

It's a priority to make sure leaders show that we are all on the same page about the way we approach the culture of the organisation, approach the people and the value we put on the customer ... The claim, the messaging that comes through is always our people are our greatest asset. Whatever it is we are doing, we've got a very specific narrative ... There are lots of voices at play, singing to the same tune (Interview with Josephine on 17th September, 2020). There is real authenticity to our leadership ... Employees

are not being told to feel this way ... They are being shown (Interview with Timothy on 1st October, 2020).

This unified effort to display an ‘authentic’ and ‘committed’ self by those in leadership positions affects the collective view of the organisation’s Executive Leaders. As one Regional Manager explained:

They all make an impression at the senior level ... The leaders here are all the same, our leaders have the same attitude ... There is enough communication out there through video, through the weekly meetings, the updates on Workplace and chats ... The consistency of conversations and behaviour, the actions from the CEO to the Executive Director to the Director to me are all consistent (Interview with Roger on 27th October, 2020).

At this point, it is important to make a clear distinction between agents and subjects of normative control (Kunda, 2009) and the degrees of authority between them. As mentioned, all business decisions rest on the shoulders of the organisation’s Executives Leaders and Directors who speak for the organisation’s interest. Agents of normative control manage the prescribed culture that is designed to elicit employee commitment to the organisation by designing a staff member role which employees have come to ‘learn’ (Interview with Audrey on 10th September, 2020) ‘trust,’ (Interview with Robyn on 9th November, 2020), and ‘enjoy’ (Interview with Becky on 13th November, 2020). In addition, the organisation’s customer centric social reality is layered with other sources of legitimacy, notably, authenticity, empowerment and engagement. These features of the organisation’s social reality are maintained by the relationship dynamics between agents vis-à-vis subjects of normative control

(Kunda, 2009). From this perspective, the social matrix is tightly woven and strongly reinforced by the intrapersonal need to visibly express and be viewed to conform to the organisation's ideology. This intrapersonal need often manifests through interpersonal expression in the operations of carrying out work on the front stage (Goffman, 1959). In other words, the self-displays made by both agents and subjects of normative control are available for constant interpretation by those who can view them.

In sum, the organisation's customer centric ideology is an experience for its staff members akin to a music-video on repeat: each staff member is reminded by various sensory stimuli that 'the customer is at the heart of everything we do.' The customer centric ethos is, therefore, promulgated by the organisation's strong sources of ideological authority. Both agents and subjects of normative control diffuse ideological reformulations toward each other, either consciously or unconsciously in the course of performing work on the front stage (Goffman, 1959). The participant's accounts indicate that the organisation's social reality promulgates 'schematic images of social order' (Geertz, 1973), including displays of authenticity, empowerment and engagement, each of which are discussed at length in Chapter Nine. In short, the social reality enacted by its staff members, at the broadest level, reflects an exclusive experience for employees, that of being part of a 'unique,' 'non-bureaucratic,' 'front facing' government organisation (Interview with Chelsea on 4th November, 2020). The next section discusses the ideological legacy of the Service NSW Start Up Executive Leadership Team.

The Service NSW Start Up Executive Leadership Team

The Service NSW Start-Up Executive Leadership Team can be viewed as a strong purveyor of the organisation's customer centric ideology through narrative emitted by long-standing employees. Staff members who joined Service NSW from Roads and Maritime Services (RMS)

continue to be loyal purveyors of the narrative disseminated by the original Executive Leaders of the organisation. These employees were carefully selected to join Service NSW from Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA). These staff members reflect very positively on their experiences, particularly when they compare their prior work experiences at RMS. One interviewee immediately felt ‘valued’ by working at Service NSW (Interview with Timothy on 1st October, 2020). Another interviewee said that he felt he could work ‘autonomously’ and be part of an organisation which valued ‘continuous improvement’ (Interview with James on 11th September, 2020). Yet for another interviewee, the result of being employed by Service NSW was simply ‘good luck’ (Interview with Pamela on 2nd November, 2020). One interviewee said they were employed by Service NSW because they ‘worked hard’ (Interview with Angela on 2nd November, 2020).

The Start-Up Executive Leadership Team cemented a customer centric philosophy for its employees that was informed by neoliberal ideology that reflected meaningful duty to the citizens of the State, a service that is enacted most clearly through Frontline workers who were hired to place the needs of the customer first. One participant reflected on the start-up phase of Service NSW by commenting:

They were all heavy hitting private sector people. Their legacy ... beyond words. I admire every single one of them. These people worked their guts out to get Service NSW off the ground. They own the legacy. They gave up so much of themselves. It wasn't a job for them. Because of their legacy, it's not a job for the people in Service NSW. It's much more than a job (Interview with Jane on 10th September, 2020).

One manager within Support Office recalled the down to earth and authentic nature of the Start-Up team by saying:

They were so easy to speak to, very approachable, never made me feel like they were Directors ... Very friendly, very humble people. The past two CEO's, they would walk the floor, 'if you're not doing this to support the customer, why are you doing it?' The people who built Service NSW from the ground up understood that if you looked after your people, they you would get the result you needed in terms of them looking after the customer ... The original team, they made it like a cult. The RMS staff that come over to Service NSW, they joined a philosophy, not another public sector organisation (Interview with James on 11^h September, 2020).

According to James, prior to the establishment of the Department of Customer Service, the previous Service NSW People and Culture team was like working with a 'very well-oiled machine' (Interview on 11^h September, 2020). Specifically, the previous Executive Director for People and Culture was viewed as a someone who 'displayed the values more than any other predecessor of the organisation' (Interview with Samantha on 9^h December, 2020). A Support Office staff manager commented on the visibility, proximity and familiarity presented by the previous People and Culture Executive Director to the Frontline by saying:

She was on the road every other week. She was out there meeting people ... She knew people intimately ... She used to joke, 'we have drunk the Kool-Aid.' She loved that expression ... As much as it was hard to see her go, she had to do that for her own well-being. When we moved to the shared services model, she would have morphed and lost

her spark and probably hated working there (Interview with Josephine on 17^h September, 2020).

The previous Executive Director of People and Culture came to work for Service NSW after having a particularly difficult personal experience and her story seemed to have a direct impact upon the subjective experience of staff members both in Support Office and the Frontline. As she put it, 'I probably didn't realise myself the power of my story, but over time, I worked that out when people came back to me two or three years later' (Interview with Jane on 10^h September, 2020). The Executive Director was pivotal in the development of the organisation's integrationist culture (Martin, 2001). Indeed, as Jane herself put it, her aim was to bring a 'clan' culture into Service NSW, to make it feel like a 'family' and to 'build upon what was already there' (Interview with Jane on 10^h September, 2020). As one participant commented, 'it was already a great culture before Jane started, she just tried to keep building upon that while the company was going through huge growth phases ... You have to give people the additional support they need to get through the difficult times' (Interview with Grace on 11^h July, 2020). As a keen follower of Edgar Schein's approach to organisational culture, Jane strived for organisational consensus. As one staff member explained:

The customer comes first, but people are people. People know what is authentic and what is not, you can't fool people. People are smart and culture eats strategy for breakfast. You have to give people nourishment for the soul ... It's about people feeling valued ... I don't care if you are the CEO or the fellow sweeping the ground ... Our culture is really important. Service NSW is like a cult (Interview with Olga on 10^h September, 2020).

The quote above illustrates the success of the integrationist approach (Martin, 2001) for the management of the organisation's culture and how the culture itself was used as a form of normative control (Kunda, 2009) to enforce and reinforce the organisation's unique social reality. In this regard, Jane continues to be a strong symbolic reminder of what it means to enact a customer centric ethos and, therefore, she remains a purveyor of the organisation's ideology evident through the narratives presented by long serving employees who continue to discuss her work and legacy at the organisation. In effect, she continues to exert influence on staff emotions and commitment to the organisation (Interview with Josephine on 17th September, 2020).

Service NSW Customers

As mentioned in Chapter Five, customer feedback plays an instrumental role in distinguishing the Service NSW culture from that which characterised the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) and Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and their past performance issues. Accordingly, delivering for the customer was the organisation's primary focus from the outset along with, most, if not all work processes being clearly orientated around transactions and products or services that aim to fulfil customer needs. As a result of placing the 'customer at the heart,' Service NSW created a powerful image of the organisation as a front facing government agency. Moreover, the organisation further legitimated itself as a customer centric agency through its claimed agility in handling State emergencies. In alignment with neoliberal ideology, every person in the State of NSW is a customer of the organisation or will be a customer at some point during their lifetime. This same focus also includes the organisation's own employees who are also construed as customers. This inclusion of employees and the public as customers provides a strong contrast with previous government agencies, such as, the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) and Roads and Maritime Services (RMS). To illustrate,

three senior leaders recalled their experience being a customer of RMS and the changes resulting from the increased customer service levels when Service NSW was introduced by commenting:

You go into one of those RTAs, no one's there. They were all behind glass panels ... I'm waiting 15 minutes on a plastic chair. I'm feeling really pissed off because it's an awful experience (Interview with Peter on 2nd July, 2020). Customers got lost in the system (Interview with Cleo on 11^h March, 2020). Even customers now come in and say, oh my gosh, you have changed ... because they were used to the RTA (Charlotte on 2nd November, 2020).

Narratives such as these are frequently circulated amongst staff members at Service NSW inductions, training sessions and team gatherings, it seems, with an underlying intention to reiterate 'the way things are done around here' (Schein, 2010: 13). These narratives, in turn, reinforce the organisation's legitimacy, both internally to its staff members and externally to the NSW public, the organisation's customers and to other public servants.

Another way the customer indirectly exerts ideological authority is through a series of rapid and continuous feedback cycles that various Service NSW managers circulate back to Frontline workers. This form of normative control is used after every transaction and involves invitations to customers to provide their level of satisfaction by scoring their customer experience via 'feedback machines' which are located at counters and at the exists of every Service Centre across NSW (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: E). In this regard, normative control involves the transmission of customer satisfaction scores to the entire Frontline team of each Service Centre by the Customer Service Manager at the end of each business day. Frontline staff and their

managers monitor performance via such feedback channels in line with the organisation's Customer Performance Indicators (CPIs). Frontline staff who consistently deliver high customer satisfaction scores are considered exemplar employees and typically receive both formal and informal recognition and rewards by various agents of normative control. As one previously employed Frontline staff member explained after his promotion into a Support Office role, 'They looked at me as a good person. That I was doing a good job. I worked hard to develop myself. My manager gave me a voucher for my good work' (Interview with Stan on 8^h October, 2020).

Positive customer comments are purposefully selected and conveyed to various staff membership groups via a range of mechanisms, including by direct communication from the Executive Leaders and Directors of the organisation. For instance, the Service NSW CEO often sends emails that provide a 'snapshot' of some of the 'great customer comments received throughout the month' (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: B). As the following example illustrates, the message is positive:

I would just like to say a big thank you to one of your workers from Silverwater ... I just got a flat tyre and was trying to change the tyre in the rain. I was stuck on the side of the road with my three kids when he pulled over and helped me. I recognised the uniform ... I would like to thank him so much. He wouldn't take any money, he told me how glad he was to help. I hope he gets this message. He is a great asset to your company (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: B).

In addition, the media helps to legitimise this form of normative control through the daily news, press articles, radio announcements and social media sites. For instance, local media providers

often support various activities initiated by Frontline staff in response to customer requests. As one Support Service Specialist (SSS) reflected:

There's always something going on in Service Centres ... We do fund raisers for the outback community ... Our Mobile Service Centres will pick up food and for drought support ... It's like a three hour round trip for customers to interact with government ... It's a big deal when the bus rolls into town. The local radio stations advertise for us for free ... We don't spend money on advertising in these communities because they embrace us so much (Interview with Elise on 11th October, 2020).

In short, customer feedback is routinely monitored and shared across the organisation on a daily basis by various agents of normative control (Kunda, 2009). From this perspective, inadequate levels of customer service monitored through customer feedback is dealt with swiftly by Customer Service Managers, Directors and Executive Leaders of the organisation. In addition, the media helps to legitimise this form of normative control through various public announcements made on the organisation's behalf.

Conclusion to Chapter Six

As outlined in Chapter Five, Service NSW's agents of normative control prescribe a 'DNA' culture that supports neoliberal ideology and Post New Public Management practice. The first part of this chapter outlined the organisation's continuous efforts to create a distinct and irreplaceable social reality by those who are strong sources of ideological influence, including State Officials, Executive Leaders and Directors, the original Service NSW Start-Up Executive Leadership Team and the organisation's customers. As the interview data demonstrated, ideological influencers exert normative control by using authorised platforms to disseminate

their narratives across a variety of stakeholders: the broader NSW public; customers; employees; and other public sector organisations and their employees.

In addition, the interviews indicated that ideological influencers exert normative control through an integrationist culture that legitimates visibility, proximity, and familiarity to Service NSW staff members and that both individually and collectively, sources of ideological authority have an impact on staff members' subjective experience. The collective narrative as explained in this chapter promotes a 'unique' image of the organisation, an image that employees, on the surface, show deep commitment to. This fact is addressed at length in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Importantly, this chapter discussed the original Start-Up Service NSW Executive Leadership Team and how they collectively played an important role in promulgating employee loyalty and commitment to the organisation despite their departure. Finally, this chapter highlighted that the organisation's customers also possess a degree of ideological authority through customer feedback channels that are designed to shape employee thoughts, feelings and behaviour. The next chapter describes the organisational setting of Service NSW, including the McKell Building and the Haymarket Service Centre.

Chapter Seven

The Organisational Setting

Introduction

This chapter describes Service NSW's organisational setting as observed during the course of field work in the Service NSW McKell Building, Support Office and the Haymarket Service Centre. This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the organisational setting including the artefacts of the organisation's culture. Included among the artefacts described are the organisation's symbols (Martin & Powers, 1983; Wilkins, 1983), the organisation's institutionalised language (Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Bate, 1994) and various presentation rituals (Kunda, 2009). While artefactual displays are identified here and decoded for cultural meaning, the deeper cognitive or semiotic structures of the organisation's practices are reserved for Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten. The first section documents the McKell Building.

The McKell Building

From the outside, the McKell Building is a rather unspectacular large rectangular concrete box. It is an architectural product of the late twentieth century, having been built in 1979 in the brutalist style with solar bronze glass windows bound by dark bronze anodised aluminium frames and smooth finished beige wall cladding. With a height of 94 metres and widths of 45 by 150 metres, the 19,788 square metre footage accommodates between 1900 to 2100 public service employees (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: F).

The McKell Building was constructed by the NSW government with the mission of providing an operating premise for its agencies including the Department of Agriculture and Health and the Automatic Data Processing Centre. Subsequently, the building was sold to a private

company and is now leased to the NSW government. The Haymarket Service Centre is situated on the east ground floor area inside the McKell Building. The Haymarket Service Centre was one of the earliest Service Centres to open to the NSW public and can be viewed as an ideal exemplar to describe a representative Service Centre, hence, it is described below.

Service Centre Haymarket

The Haymarket Service Centre is remarkably bright in contrast to McKell's lobby with purposefully scattered, fluorescent LED lighting panels overhead and nondescript grey carpeting below. Within the four white walls is a careful assortment of colours intentionally designed to enrich the sensory experience of each customer.

All Service NSW Frontline staff are dressed in the designer corporate wardrobe: chic navy blazes with tailored, red and white checker, light-weight and mostly iron-pressed shirts. An option for a mid-length fitted skirt or long pants for women, unsurprisingly, the latter too, observed for men. With over twenty team staff members on site, each is adorned with a name badge securely attached to the upper left chest region of each corporate blazer or shirt with a photo ID access card swivelling from branded lanyards below, most commonly pinned to attire around the waist. One would be hard-pressed to forget a staff member's name while being served.

A Service NSW Concierge greets those entering through the Service NSW logoed automatic door. Alongside the Concierge are two Digital Service Representatives (DSRs) or 'Digis' and Customer Service Representatives also known as 'CSRs.' These staff are positioned closest to the entry of the Service Centre and are first in the line of duty tasked with the responsibility of addressing initial patron requests. Customer concerns of various sorts appear to be dealt with

swiftly. For instance, Concierge staff coordinate with Digis and Customer Service Representatives in brisk conversation to help address customer problems and requests. Managing time on the ‘dancefloor,’ that is, the space Digi’s and Customer Service Representatives use to navigate customers to the appropriate serving areas within Service Centres, appears to be significantly important. A keen observer perceives pithy exchanges between Frontline staff as rather well-rehearsed, in what looks like an organised fun game of communication. The Haymarket Service Centre emits a quiet, albeit confident buzz with smiling, young and energetic staff members who fluidly guide customers to designated sections of the Service Centre. The background music also adds an impression of informality and relaxation. In essence, the Service Centre environment allows one to observe the symbolic language used by staff members of the organisation and to analyse how Post New Public Management policy is enacted on the ground through customer centric workplace practices.

The first designated area for dealing with customer concerns is where they can complete and lodge relevant government forms. These forms include but are not limited to: motor registry; maritime; life events; home building and property; and business and training. The second designated area for managing customer issues centres on self-service platforms where patrons can digitally transact with the government. Here, an organised mix of desktop computers and touch screens are strategically placed along the boundary of the south side of the Service Centre. These are mostly utilised in a collaborative effort with Digis and customers who complete online transactions together. For increasingly complex requests, customers are attended to by appropriately skilled Customer Service Representatives after a designated Concierge offers a ticket which assigns a particular Customer Service Representative to solve the customer request. Customer Service Representatives appear to multitask, typing fast while seated behind one of twelve interlocking light timber laminate service desks.

Intermittently, Customer Service Representatives glance at their computer screens whilst seemingly engaged in conversation either with patrons or with other staff roaming around on the ‘dancefloor.’ Every so often, Customer Service Representatives swivel their screens toward their customers in an effort to visibly express some important fact or relevant piece of information to help close out the ‘ticket.’ Customer Service Representatives with the most experience are called ‘leaders’ and strategically situated in close proximity to newer Frontline staff in order to broaden their assistance if and when required.

Customers must wait to be served, however the waiting time is usually brief – minutes, if not seconds and certainly not hours as some customers recalled during Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) days. Most customers, generally seem patient while seated at one of five light blue, dark blue colour-combo lounges. In fact, customers can view their exact waiting time via a large television screen that is secured to the wall behind the Customer Service Representative service counters and directly facing customers who are waiting to be served. The screen’s content is updated instantaneously, displaying numbers that reflect ‘tickets called’ and ‘tickets waiting.’ Customers relax and perhaps enjoy the background music until their designated ticket number has been called via a gently toned, albeit, automated, female voice ‘ticket number 124, proceed to counter 8.’

Each Service Centre employs a Customer Service Manager who is responsible for all Frontline staff. It is the Customer Service Manager who is ultimately responsible for all customer transaction times. The Haymarket Service Centre has a customer transaction time of only 6 minutes, lower than the expected norm for other centres, which is approximately 10 minutes. The average customer transaction time, particularly in metropolitan Service Centres, is one

metric of which Frontline staff can either be made to feel very proud of, or, conversely, an indicator of the need for improvements.

During COVID-19, 'serving time' demands placed upon Frontline staff members 'intensified' (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020). Frontline staff were required to immediately adjust to a different operating environment, including the numerical management of customers allowed to enter the Service Centre. Customers, therefore, had to queue outside for a period of time in order for Frontline staff to follow the one person per 4 square meter rule that was dictated by NSW health authorities. Frontline staff were issued with iPads to digitally serve customers outside of the Service Centre in an effort to minimize customer waiting times. Offering this level of service was particularly important for elderly or pregnant customers waiting to be served. Hygiene officers were also engaged to wipe down counters frequently throughout the day to ensure hard surfaces were sanitised and COVID-19 free. In addition, clear screens were placed in front of each counter to prevent the spread of the virus through respiratory transmission. In brief, demands placed on Frontline staff during COVID-19 presented new challenges and in many ways, intensified their work.

The Haymarket Service Centre presents assistance for a mix of male and female residents, young to old, able bodied and the disabled, new mothers with prams, back-packers, racially, linguistically and or socio-culturally diverse and monocultural patrons. A scan of any metropolitan Service Centre highlights the demographically diverse customer base simply by observing the attire - shorts, thongs, flannelette shirts, tattoos semi covered or exposed, corporate suits and everything in between. Therefore, a vastly diverse mix of NSW residents transact with the NSW government and a very diverse group of Frontline staff in metropolitan centres are carefully selected to reflect the demographics of the localities they serve.

Most of the time, the Frontline team appear to work at a medium to fast pace, however when the Service Centre is not busy, Frontline staff often use the time to make light-hearted jokes to one another in the course of carrying out their work. During slower interludes, Frontline staff may use designated desktop computers stationed further away from the middle of the Service Centre to complete mandatory e-learning modules or other forms of online training. Much of the technical and behavioural training for the Frontline is created and developed by Support Office.

Service NSW Support Office

The Support Office is located on Levels 19 and 20 of the McKell Building. In the middle of each floor are three sets of elevators. On each floor, immediately outside the elevators there are internal slogans on each wall representing the Service NSW values: ‘passion, accountability and teamwork’ all of which are surrounded by other synonyms, ‘service,’ ‘respect,’ ‘innovate,’ ‘improving,’ ‘quality,’ ‘simplifying,’ ‘transformation’ and ‘choice.’ The word ‘accountability’ is accompanied by a pithy explanatory statement, ‘we work to create value and take ownership for the customer experience end-to-end.’ All logos and wall slogans are designed to explain what it means to be a customer centric organisation. Support Office employees are, therefore, reminded of the Service NSW values and what they stand for every time the lifts are accessed. For most public servants who work on levels 19 and 20, this is likely to be a minimum of a few times per day if one considers coming to and from work, morning, lunch and afternoon tea breaks, attending meetings or travelling between meetings.

When exiting one of the three lifts, the adjacent kitchen is visible. The kitchen has a large bench with tables and seating nearby and with views overlooking Sydney’s Central Business District (CBD) and Central Train Station. The kitchen seems to be a place where Support Office staff

engage with each other quite routinely. It has a steady flow of staff, coming and going at all times of the working day, however morning and afternoon breaks are busier periods. Some Support Office staff members use the kitchen as a pit stop on the way to a meeting or some other event engaging in informal chitchat in the process. The transactions are generally audible to bystanders, although sometimes conversations are whispered. Some Support Office staff members extend chats for longer periods and appear to go into deeper, more serious discussion. Next to the kitchen and adjacent to the lifts there is a small glass meeting room which is the main Board Room on level 20. This room appears to be permanently occupied by various Support Office staff.

The Board Room is approximately 6 metres by 3 metres in size. The rectangle wood boardroom table takes up most of the room. The large black leather chairs swivel with ease and comfortably recline should one like to push back into it during lengthy meetings. The blinds are often down, the lights are on and the room temperature is rather cool. Next to the Board Room is the CEO's office, in front of which there is a partition with two computers where the CEO's assistants are seated. The CEO's assistants have a clear view of those passing from the front to the back of level 20, which appears to be how most Support Office staff traverse back and forth despite the fact that there is another access passageway on the other side of the lifts. Only the CEO has his own office. All other staff hot-desk. Some Executive Directors, do however, seem to have an unspoken rule (Van Maanen, 1976) about remaining at their designated desk and do not hot-desk frequently as other Support Office workers do. Executive Directors also have access to an Executive Assistant who is typically seated close by and, therefore, does not move seats frequently. There are also desks reserved for visitors of the Executive Directors.

On the perimeter of level 20 are meeting rooms with clear glass on the top and bottom, exposing only the extremities of those inside. Only the middle section of glass is opaque. The meeting rooms are generally nicely colour coded and must be booked via the online booking system. Ad hoc or urgent meetings may allow some Support Office staff members to override pre-existing bookings made by other staff. Those who overstay their allocated bookings are requested to leave. The ‘War Room,’ another symbolic term used as part of the institutionalised language of the organisation used by collective staff members expresses the agony of a pending battle (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: D). From the perspective of Support Office staff, the ‘War Room’ is a meeting room reserved for employees who need to quickly come together to deal with crisis issues. Support Office staff who do not meet the immediate criteria for use are kindly asked to leave for that reason.

On every floor of the McKell Building, office cubicles are lined up across a spacious hall with shared meeting rooms on the periphery. There are four rows of partitions, and each row has four or five desks or work stations on each side. People cannot see their neighbouring colleagues unless they stand up, but private conversations can still be heard. There are also workstations without screens on the back wall of the building, which have windows facing out toward the four main streets that surround the building. Every workspace has its own swivel desktop screen where Support Office staff put their laptops on the station and connect up to the screen. Each workstation is equipped with a computer terminal, a black swivel chair and a telephone although it appears that Support Office staff members often use their mobile phones for conducting work communications. In brief, levels 19 and 20 of the McKell Building are designed to enable both deliberate and spontaneous dialogue between Support Office staff members while equally decreasing status distinctions.

The Support Office appears to 'support' the values prescribed by the culture, such as informality, autonomy, flexibility and a sense of individual empowerment reflected by the ability of Support Office staff members to manage their own schedules and design their workday as they choose. Depending on which team they are in, Support Office staff usually have negotiated arrangements for managing their working schedules. Yet while Support Office staff come and go as they please, they can nevertheless also be discreetly watched by others. Due to the fluidity of communication between team members, most staff know where each other's team members are most of the time. This provides a stark contrast to the very rigid supervision of work times in the Service Centres, where Frontline staff are subject to strict and rigid time boundaries and enforceable performance standards that do not apply to Support Office staff members.

On a typical day in the Support Office, staff can be seen at their workstations, often using earphones to speak on their phones or to listen to music. In this way, they keep out the background noise of the open office or prevent interruptions that seem to be part and parcel of a space designed for openness and transparent communication. Staff are often seen running to and from 'back to back' meetings, signalling they have not had any time to be at their desk to do their 'actual work.' Executive Directors also come and go. During strategy planning events, Executive Directors are rarely seen, therefore, if a staff member is allocated a specific time to meet with Executive Directors, it appears strict time boundaries apply.

Support Office staff members tend to come and go from meetings without too much offence if one leaves prematurely, although most apologise for the inconvenience ahead of time by letting the chair of the meeting know in advance of their premature departure. Many Support Office staff members utilise the level 4 cafeteria for private encounters and informal meetings

particularly during mornings and afternoons since during lunch time the cafeteria is overcrowded. At times, Support Office staff members also head to one of the several cafés or restaurants in the McKell Building's vicinity for both formal and informal dialogue and greater privacy, which can sometimes be a concern particularly for the organisation's Executive Directors or Senior Managers. In addition, other government owned or leased facilities adjacent to the McKell Building provide the stage for many off-site meetings, conferences, public announcements and reward ceremonies.

Support Office staff members are generally relaxed in their attire embracing a casual business appearance. However, some Support Office staff exhibit a deliberate look of polished sophistication. For instance, those seeking promotions or fulltime employment after completing their internships often wear suits. Steve, who is part of the graduate program always wears dark blue navy suits, always wears his jacket in the office, no tie, with a high quality, bright white iron pressed shirt. As he put it, 'You can't go wrong in a navy-blue suit. I have three of the same suits, I just rotate them around. I don't have to think about what I need to wear every day of the week' (Interview with Steve on 10th March, 2020).

In sum, departments and teams in the Support Office seem to work in harmony toward a common goal with the customer in mind. Support Office staff appear to espouse an air of informality while also appearing to work very productively. When they engage in dialogue, they exude a sense of authenticity with very natural and unassuming exchanges between organisational members that seem engaging and meaningful.

Conclusion to Chapter Seven

This chapter described Service NSW's organisational setting as observed during the course of field work in the Service NSW McKell Building, Support Office and the Haymarket Service

Centre. This chapter also introduced some of the localised languages used by the various membership groups of Service NSW, highlighting the symbolic nature of staff interactions that places the ‘customer at the heart’ of the organisation’s Business as Usual (BAU) operations, language that exemplifies the practice of Post New Public Management. In addition, by offering an introduction to the artefactual displays pertinent to Executive Leaders and Directors, Support Office staff and Frontline teams in the Haymarket Service Centre this chapter introduced the key membership groups being investigated in this ethnographic and qualitative methods study. The organisation’s membership groups are critically analysed in great detail in the next Chapter.

Chapter Eight

Service NSW Organisational Membership Groups

Introduction

This chapter discusses the various membership groups of the organisation in significant detail. Clear distinctions are made between Executive Leaders and Directors, Support Office and the Frontline. This chapter argues that the organisation's Executive Leaders and Directors are the primary promoters of the organisation's ideological formulations and, therefore, the primary agents of normative control, while employees of the Support Office fluctuate most between acting as both agents and subjects of normative control (Kunda, 2009). From this perspective, Support Office staff members act as information conduits between the Executive Leaders and Directors of the organisation to the Frontline. By contrast, staff in Frontline units and roles are considered the primary subjects of normative control. To begin this chapter, a broad outline of the organisation's various membership groups is presented.

Organisational Membership Groups

As outlined in Chapter Three, Kunda argued that 'the ability to elicit, channel and direct creative energies and activities of employees ... to make them want to contribute, is based on designing a member role that employees are expected to incorporate as an integral part of their sense of self' (2009: 8). From this perspective, ideological formulations are constructed for particular membership groups within an organisation. While all Service NSW organisational membership groups add instrumental value to help drive the customer centric ethos, the organisation's ideological formulations are primarily targeted at Frontline employees who directly and routinely receive feedback from the organisation's agents of normative control. Managers harness customer feedback to legitimise the organisation as a successful public sector

agency by stressing the need for consistent positive customer feedback. This is one fundamental requirement for enforcing and reinforcing the organisation's legitimacy as a front facing public sector government agency.

In Service NSW, three organisational membership groups can be identified, notably, incumbents of Executive Leadership and Director units, Support Office and the Frontline. Significant differences prevail between them in relation to work flexibility, diversity, inclusion and home and work time boundaries. It is important to appreciate that the diversity within each membership group is influenced by regulatory frameworks. Service NSW is bound by government legislation, including *The Government Sector Employment Act 2013*, *The Government Sector Regulation 2014* (the GSW Regulation), *The Government Sector Employment Rules 2014* (the GSE rules) which replaced the *Public Sector Employment Management Act 2002* on 24^h February 2014 and the *Public Sector Employment and Management (General) Regulation 1996*. These laws and regulations include benchmark demographic targets to which all government agencies must actively contribute. Service NSW aims to meet and sometime exceeds its government benchmark targets across a number of key demographic categories, including female Executive Leaders and other EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) groups across the organisation, notably, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from Racial, Ethnic, Ethnoreligious minority groups, people with a Disability and people with a Disability requiring a work-related adjustment (Service NSW, 2019-20). Accordingly, Service NSW developed a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy aligned with the NSW Premier's Priorities in building a diverse and inclusive public service workforce. This strategy aims to embed the EEO values with a focus on inclusion. The organisation claims that it is continuing to engage and develop its diverse workforce with wider government programs through the delivery of the Service NSW People Development Strategy. The strategy incorporates a range of employee programs, notably, Public Service

Commission Graduate Programs, Aboriginal Workforce Development Programs, Young Professionals Network, Refugee Internship Programs and the Women in Leadership Program (WiL). In addition, Service NSW launched the Refugee Internship Program, a professional development course which allows refugees to experience paid work in an Australian workplace by securing employment in entry level customer service roles. Some graduates of the Refugee Internship Program gain ongoing, permanent employment within Service Centres. Successful graduates who demonstrate competence may further gain employment in Support Office roles, including Procurement, Finance, Technology Services, Human Resources and or Corporate Relations. The program's participants have included individuals from countries including Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Tibet (Service NSW, 2019). Despite such efforts in relation to diversity and inclusion, there are key demographic disparities across the various membership groups of the organisation. The next section presents these demographic distinctions along with corresponding ideological formulations for each membership group.

Executive Leaders and Directors

Most, if not all members of the Executive Leadership Team have public service experience, specifically in policy creation and strategic implementation across the public sector. Some Executive Directors have prior work experience in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Family and Community Services or the private sector, particularly in banking and finance as well as private consulting and tech firms. Most Executive Leaders have post graduate certificates or degrees, some with MBAs or Master equivalents, very few, if any have obtained Doctorates. Compensation, promotions and pay rises for Executive Directors occur through standard government pay levels which are paid on a fortnightly basis. Many appear to receive promotional or career opportunities by word of mouth before formal applications are lodged (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020).

Executive Leaders are expected to encompass a political mindset with business acumen and are often called upon to carefully manage political matters across other State and Federal government agencies. Executive Leaders are expected to respond immediately to questions and requests, sometimes in public view and to act with high levels of dramaturgical care in alignment with the organisation's ideology. They are also expected to develop and apply political nous while concurrently ensuring their immediate direct reports are ready to create and implement emergency and ad hoc plans as dictated by the state while maintaining Business as Usual (BAU) requirements. In short, for Executive Leaders and Directors, high levels of dramaturgical care is an important measure for being viewed as successfully performing in their role. As one senior leader put it:

There seems to be a lot of nervousness around performance under government ... It's very political ... It's very hierarchical ... I thought finance was bad ... You know, the Minister is coming, roll out the red carpet ... They all want to make an impression at the senior level on those types of people. That's probably fair enough, they pay the bills (Interview with Jamie on 21st October, 2020).

One indicator of success is an ability to adequately perform before political superiors, what Goffman (1959) referred to as performing on the 'front stage.' Another indicator of success is an ability to fluidly move from one scene, encounter or relationship (Van Maanen, 1979) to another without mismanaging their performance displays (Goffman, 1959). Therefore, the vacillation between these managed dramaturgical selves is most noticeable when Executive Leaders and Directors move from scene to scene, encounter to encounter or relationship to relationship, as one Director stated:

I change the way I communicate, the language I use depending on my audience. I mean, I'm in meetings with Deputy Secretaries and with DSRs, our lowest graded role in the Service Centre ... I've become a bit of a chameleon, I've had to be effective in whatever environment I'm in (Interviews with Vanessa on 21^s September, 2020).

Another Director echoed this sentiment by saying:

Tempering your approach based on the person that you're dealing with ... Some need the soft and very positive approach ... couch it the fluffy stuff to make them feel comfortable. But you've only got that luxury once (Interview with Candice on 5^h November, 2020).

One of the most important responsibilities for Executive Leaders is the preservation and improvement of the organisation's public reputation. Executive Leaders and Directors display this alignment to the organisation by working around the clock to deliver the organisation's strategic priorities, notably, 'Big Rocks' while taking initiative on new projects, reducing costs and effectively managing the resources allocated by the 'public purse.' Most importantly, Executive Leaders and Directors prescribe and describe the organisation's culture to all constituents by broadcasting these efforts and their subsequent results to an audience as large as possible (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020).

The organisational structure is perceived by most to be a 'shallow layered pyramid' (Interviews with Jamie on 21^s October, 2020; and Roger on 27^h October, 2020). Communication, therefore, in most cases, is rapid and fluid between Executive Directors and their respective direct reports and broader teams. Communication between Executive Leaders and their teams

occur through regular phone calls, video conferences or face to face meetings (Interview with Anastasia on 19^h October, 2020). The 2020 bushfires and floods as well as the COVID-19 pandemic and cybersecurity threats illustrate recent examples reflecting the quick and fluid nature of the organisation's communication channels. One Executive Leader explained this by saying:

I was involved in the bushfire response ... we as an organisation had no prior experience in dealing with this ... It was very much, test and learn, put it out there, refine it, tweak it and make improvements. We didn't have time to make it perfect ... We had to get services out to the people. We had to improve it as we went along ... It was all hands-on deck (Interview with Vanessa on 21^s September, 2020).

Such unprecedented threats potentially affect the organisation and its Executive Leadership Team. One specific to the organisation's image and reputation comes from its leader's ability to handle cyber security threats as one interviewee commented, 'The cyber security breach was the worst thing that happened to this organisation ... We were perfect. That's the facade, that's what we're driving here. That's what I mean by paranoia, pressure to keep the reputation of the organisation' (Interview with Roger on 27^h October, 2020).

The Executive Leadership Team holds the ultimate responsibility for any mismanagement of organisational matters that are made public and their rectification. Protection against reputational damage is, therefore, attached to individual executives. For example, reflecting on the impact of the machinery of government changes to the CEO's reputation, one Director commented:

It's the CEO whose head is on the chopping block. When the shit starts to hit with our culture surveys in 12 months or 24 months and it starts to show deterioration, it's going to be his head on the chopping block ... I hope he and his Execs hold the powers at DCS accountable and have some meaty conversations before we get to that point (Interview with Elise on 11^h October, 2020).

Nevertheless, for Executive Directors, upward mobility can be quite rapid (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020). Once the title of an Executive Director has been granted, most tend to stay in those positions for a number of years while carefully planning and selecting their next upward move within the public sector. Many career advances begin through private conversations amongst senior public servants. At this level, public servants have typically built strong personal and professional reputations by demonstrating capability at managing complex projects which require the management of large teams as well as by demonstrating political nous in a variety of working arrangements (Interview with Elise on 11^h October, 2020). It can be argued that this relies on demonstrating significant and consistent dramaturgical care when moving from scene to scene, encounter to encounter and relationship to relationship (Van Maanen, 1979).

In addition, Executive Directors are required to manage heavy workloads while remaining persistently visible across the organisation's various membership groups. While Executive Directors are free to work flexibly, most appear to have merged home and work boundaries. As one senior leader put it, 'days become nights become days' (Interview with Katherine on 24^h September, 2020). Whether working from home or in the office, most Executive Leaders and Directors consider work to be part of their private lives which are not limited to specific times or designated places. For instance, during the COVID-19 lockdown, Executive Directors

routinely used video conferences platforms such as 'Teams' or 'Zoom' as an opportunity to perform in their roles. Through these mediums, they exercised normative control (Kunda, 2009) by creating an 'authentic' online vibe. One Executive Leader described how she exercised performance management while working from home by saying:

It's a lot more relaxed. It's a little less formal ... Meetings are shorter, but it doesn't mean that we're missing out on things. What I have done is create new check-in mechanisms with teams that are different to what we've had in the past because you can't have that corridor conversation. It's hard as a senior leader in the business to influence remotely. That took a lot of trial and error (Interview with Anastasia on 19^h October, 2020).

For Executive Leaders and Directors, scenes, encounters and interactions of various sorts, whether close or distant, are perceived as an opportunity to display commitment to the organisation, including while away from the home or office environment. To illustrate, the concept *Front Stage Self Display* draws on Goffman's (1959) front stage and Van Maanen's scenes, encounters and relationships. *Front Stage Self Displays* by Executive Leaders and Directors reflect the need to perform on the front stage (Goffman, 1959) at all times by overtly merging professional and personal boundaries, for instance, while taking personal leave. A Senior Manager described a Director's evident commitment to the organisation by saying, 'people are on leave, but they'll still check in on Workplace,' as occurred when one was overseas in a European city the previous year, but nevertheless, was 'posting photos still doing Steptember' (Interview with Josephine on 17^h September, 2020). Steptember is a charity event that

¹ A workplace social media platform similar to Yama.

challenges individuals to take 10,000 steps a day for 30 days during the month of September to help raise support for people living with cerebral palsy across the world.²

While working in the McKell Building with Support Office staff, it is only the CEO who has the privilege to escape to the privacy of a personal office, the entry to which is protected by two secretaries. At the same time, the lack of physical boundaries between Executive Leaders and Directors and Support Office staff means the former are rarely out of view as they do not have personal offices and, therefore, maintaining privacy concerning sensitive business operations is an ongoing concern (Interview with Elise on 11th October, 2020). Maintaining control of sensitive information is especially important during times of disruption to BAU while concurrently performing *Front Stage Self Displays*. For instance, in times of crisis, machinery of government developments and the organisational restructure redundancies, Executive Leaders discussed their career roadblocks or failures privately with trusted others, however, the reasons offered were generally treated as a personal decision made in self-interest while on the front stage (Goffman, 1959), as one previous Executive Director commented, ‘an Executive Director should only be around for three years, then it is time to move on. I got out at the right time’ (Interview with Olga on 10th September, 2020).

Except for the CEO, Executive Leaders and Directors are predominately women of Anglo-Saxon backgrounds. Indeed, there are programs to assist the professional development and advancement of female leaders. One example is the incorporation of the Flexible Work Policy for women in leadership positions. Another example is the series of Women in Leadership (WiL) events, which invites aspiring female leaders to discuss professional development opportunities. Female representation in senior leadership positions within the organisation are

² Website: <https://www.september.org.au>.

considered by most as ‘progressive’ in comparison to other public or private sector organisations (Interviews with Chelsea on 4^h November, 2020 and Barbara on 14^h November, 2020).

However, despite good female representation at the Executive Leadership and Director level, there appears to be a lack of cultural diversity within senior leadership ranks. This is a critical issue raised by staff members in the Support Office and the Frontline in which diversity is prominent (Interviews with: Candice on 5^h November, 2020; Miranda on 5^h November, 2020; and Samantha, 9^h December, 2020). As the following account from one staff member demonstrates, women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)³ backgrounds in these units are unable to identify with any Executive Leaders and, therefore, conclude that only Anglo-Saxon Australians can achieve high ranking senior management roles. One staff member from a culturally diverse background commented:

I was having a conversation with my manager a few months ago. She encouraged me to get a mentor ... But I want someone who's got the same views and experiences as me. My manager asked me what I meant ... I told her, I want someone who has overcome my kinds of problems ... I'm yet to find someone in a senior position that's from a very culturally diverse background (Interviews with Samantha on 9^h December, 2020).

Another CALD staff member echoed the above sentiment by saying:

³ See Sawrikar P; Katz I, 2009, 'How useful is the term "Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD)" in the Australian social policy discourse?', in *Proceedings from the ASPC*, SPRC, UNSW, presented at Australian Social Policy Conference: An Inclusive Society? Practicalities and Possibilities, Sydney, 08 July 2009 – 10 July 2009, https://www.aspc.unsw.edu.au/sites/www.aspc.unsw.edu.au/files/uploads/aspc_historical_conferences/2009/paper276.pdf

If you look at the Executive Leadership Team, I would challenge you to find the diversity. We still have a long way to go. I do believe that our Executive Leadership Team should be making a better effort ... There is no one that might challenge their views, not just sit there and say yes, but actually, put some power behind what we need to do to fix the diversity issues in senior leadership (Interview with Miranda on 5th November, 2020).

Support Office

Support Office staff members are primarily responsible, as the name suggests, for providing 'support' to the 'Frontline.' It is this membership group that demonstrates, most obviously, the fluidity between agents and subjects of normative control (Kunda, 2009). The Support Office conveys ideological formulations to Frontline staff and peers, while also being the subjects of normative control exercised by Executive Leaders and Directors. In effect, Support Office members are the conduit between Executive Leadership, Senior Managers and the Frontline units, with the latter being considered most central to the organisation's BAU activities. Yet while Support Office staff members are part of the organisation's ideological formulations, they are also the membership group that is most affected by cost reduction restructures associated with machinery of government changes.

Generally, Support Office staff members hold mid-level professional and managerial expertise. Middle managers encompass a wide range of undergraduate degrees, including engineering and computer science as well as attainment of other professional accreditations such as PROSCI 'Change Management' certification.⁴ Some Support Office staff members also hold Master degrees or are in the process of completing them. Master degrees are held in high regard

⁴ A Change Management model for organisations based on building Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement (ADKAK). See <https://www.prosci.com>.

for Support Office staff who are seeking promotions within the organisation or within other government agencies (Interview with Charlotte on 2nd November, 2020).

As mentioned, Support Office staff members, in large part, collaborate with Executive Leaders and Directors in delivering support and solutions to the Frontline in times of crisis in order to make sure BAU operations remain effective. Prior to the establishment of the Department of Customer Service with the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model, communication appeared to flow rather fluidly across teams and departments within Service NSW. If escalations occurred, they were generally dealt with quickly. A manager commented on the lean structure and the fluid communication between line managers by saying that ‘getting results on the Frontline is down to seven people across the whole State. It is a complex business. Our job is to make it simple’ (Interview with Roger on 27th October, 2020).

During the pandemic, Support Office staff members worked from home in standard working hours although they also often worked longer if necessary. During times of crisis, such as this one, working hours were extended by default and all employees were expected to work as long as needed to get work done to ensure BAU operational effectiveness. Those who were eager to progress their careers worked outside standard office hours for longer periods and made this information known to their managers (Interviews with Sam on 28th October, 2020 and Leo on 2nd November, 2020). Some went out of their way to visibly demonstrate their commitment by reducing the boundaries between work and home life, and in doing so, displayed an ability to successfully perform as a future Executive Leader or Director within the organisation (Interview with Josephine on 17th September, 2020).

Hiring and promotion within the Support Office relies on a combination of formal and informal processes, notably, through word of mouth and through formal application processes. Those on temporary assignments or those seeking promotional opportunities or secondments are usually notified or requested to express interest through word of mouth or are approached before a formal application process is requested. A Training Lead explained this process by saying:

When I came in with *Project 1000*, I mentioned I brought four other Revenue staff along with me. They're currently here and they were meant to be here with me till July ... But Sue requested if we can stay on for an extra three months. Then she asked me if I would be willing to stay through till December. I said yes. Then she was able to suitability assess me for an extra 12 months and now I'll be with Service NSW till August next year (Interview with Patricia on 8^h September, 2020).

Another manager described her experience as follows:

I got a couple of bites for a couple of roles ... then I heard from Witney. I had worked with her very briefly. I got this voicemail from her, 'please don't make any decisions at all until you've spoken to me ... I have this role and it is a really good fit for you.' I said, 'I've kind of already said yes to someone else.' Then I said, 'OK, fine, I'm coming' ... She was saying all the right things ... She just seemed to sniff me out, 'I know how hard you work ... You do whatever you need to do, work remotely, take whatever time you need.' That just made it (Interview with Josephine on 17^h September, 2020).

Some Frontline workers have also been promoted into higher ranking roles. This occurred for a few refugees who graduated from successful participation in the Refugee Internship Program and were promoted into Support Office roles. Some refugees, particularly those with high levels of academic achievement gained in their home countries who consistently demonstrated the customer centric ethos were given opportunities to progress into Support Office roles. One described his career advancement since 2016 as follows, ‘First, I started with SSI ... then I became a Digi, then Customer Service Representative and now I’m a Junior ICT engineer (Interview with Frank on 2nd October, 2020).

In stark contrast to the Executive Leadership Team, diversity is extensive among Support Office staff in terms of both gender and cultural ethnicity. A Support Office leader explained her self-conscious marginality by commenting:

I’m a brownie. I’m from an Eastern culture, especially being a woman, you know, if there's a problem, deal with it yourself, don't make a fuss ... I always say ‘yes’ ... I was raised to respect your authority figures. If they ask you to do something, then do what needs to be done (Interview with Patricia on 8^h September, 2020).

As one staff member demonstrated, for young females who are Anglo-Australian and who are perceived to be aspiring future leaders, promotions can occur quite rapidly. As she commented:

I was going to uni and I accepted a 12 month contract at Roads and Maritime Services ... For 12 months, I travelled around and helped new Service Centres open their doors and was that extra resource on the counter, particularly at the sites that hired all external staff ... I was meant to be in Sydney for four days, I ended up being there for

nine weeks. They helped me move to Sydney to work as a CSR. Then I moved into a Coordinator role for about five months. Then I moved into a Training Specialist role for about two years. Then a Training Lead role and then I moved into the Training Manager role (Interview with Pamela on 2nd November, 2020).

Further, work flexibility options are generally offered to Support Office staff members. Support Office staff 'benefit' from seeing each other 'face to face' for 'workshops' or for 'the beginning of projects,' 'once or twice a week' either at 'McKell' or 'other' office locations (Interview with Inness on 16^h November, 2020). During COVID-19, Support Office staff members worked remotely. Most preferred to keep it that way. A Support Office Manager explained this by saying:

COVID has actually made a positive impact for me. If there is a meeting, we're only meeting because it is work related stuff that we have to talk about. I don't want to sit next to anybody for them to see what I'm eating or what I'm wearing or have any small talk. I can have all the small talk at home with my wife, which I genuinely prefer (Interview with Leo on 2nd November, 2020).

Another Support Officer leader explained her perceived increases in productivity while working from home during COVID-19, by saying, 'You're not walking to the bus stop. It's all those little tasks, all those little things that you do every day, those decisions that you make, you're not doing any more' (Interview with Crystal on 12^h November, 2020). And another Support Office staff member spoke about her work opportunities and challenges due to COVID-19 by stating:

My team, none of us live in Sydney. We will all have to commute ... COVID has been good in some ways ... it has also presented challenges where I've been thrown into this new job in a completely new area with new managers and had to learn how to do all this stuff online without someone showing you ... I've loved it, so I wouldn't change it ... They've asked us what we want to do moving forward and how much time we're prepared to commit to meet in the city. Most of us said once a fortnight or once a month. That's it. We can do the rest from home (Interview with Bronnie on 9^h November, 2020).

However, those tasked with training new employees appeared to struggle with being able to fully interpret the impact of their work on other people's subjective experience while working for home during COVID-19. As one training lead explained:

You don't know what other people are thinking and feeling about you and your work. It can affect people's engagement with you starting off in an organisation and not having that face to face personal element. Due to the circumstances, you have got to keep people's safety in check (Interview with Samantha on 9^h December, 2020).

Remaining 'visible' is a key concern for those who have the option to work flexibly. Problematically, here is where 'Workplace,' the organisation's social media platform functions against staff members who are less cautious in how they manage the way they display themselves. Hence, Support Office staff took action to control (Kunda, 2009) the way their subordinates on the Frontline presented themselves online in public view while working flexibly outside the offices, as the following account from a Regional Manager explained:

Half the organisation were fronting customers during COVID and the other half had flexible work arrangements and were posting pictures of themselves and their dogs in the sun, doing their work on a laptop which really went down well if you're a Frontline worker having no screens, no PPE, no nothing ... That backfired in terms of flexibility ... It was raised very quickly by Regional Managers. 'For fuck's sake, take down those posts because it's doing nothing for the organisation. It's doing nothing for the Frontline' (Interview with Jamie on 21^s October, 2020).

In sum, Support Office staff are the conduit between the Executive Leaders and the Frontline and as such they shift between being both agents and subjects of normative control (Kunda, 2009), although it can be argued that the dramaturgical demands on them are not as extreme or unrelenting as they are for Executive Leaders and Directors or the staff on the Frontline. While their sense of involvement and motivation appears strong and their tendency to exercise dramaturgical care remains high while in the office on the front stage (Goffman, 1959), this subcultural group also has greater freedom as a result of their flexible work arrangements. The Frontline membership group of the organisation is discussed next.

Frontline

Frontline staff members generally have a background in customer service, including retail, hospitality and banking. Entry into Frontline roles, from the point of recruitment onward requires a demonstrated 'passion for the customer' (Interview with Emily on 23^d September, 2020). Personal and professional attributes include 'motivation,' 'professional demeanour,' 'communication' and 'interpersonal skills' (Interview with Vanessa on 21^s September, 2020).

Frontline staff usually have TAFE certifications and advanced diplomas. Few have graduate degrees. Outside of refugees who were employed as part of the organisation's Refugee Internship Program, few have Master degrees. Those seeking career advancement are generally participating in part-time or full-time study of sorts. A mixture of half completed studies were also documented in the fieldnotes.

Cultural and linguistic diversity on the Frontline is high in metropolitan areas of NSW (Interview with Barbara on 14^h November, 2020). One reason for this increased diversity relates to the organisation's recognition that its customers are highly diverse and staff in Service Centres should reflect the profile of customers they serve. In metropolitan Service Centres, there has been an increased need for Frontline staff members to be able to communicate in multiple languages to solve customer inquiries and problems (Interview with Robyn on 9^h November, 2020). By contrast, regional and rural Service Centres do not have high levels of cultural and linguistic diverse Frontline staff members. Previous efforts in this regard have apparently failed, as one Frontline staff member commented:

We have examples where we have hired refugees across our metropolitan business and some were put into regional Australian sites. English is not their first language ... Most really struggled. We ended up transferring them back into our Metropolitan Service Centres. The challenge is your team has to reflect the cultural diversity in the communities that they serve. If they ... aren't reflective of cultural diversity, then it's a bit of a challenge (Interview with Barbara on 14^h November, 2020).

As will be explained in greater detail in Chapter Eleven, racial bias and social exclusion are commonly experienced by staff members on the Frontline. However, one significant issue that

Frontline staff members face in comparison to other membership groups within the organisation is harassment from customers. A second-generation migrant recalled:

I've had customers go to me, 'you should do this under the table because you're Lebanese,' ... Another time, I had a customer actually go to me in a very sexual way that he would do something to me if I didn't get something done the way he wanted it (Interview with Samantha on 9^h December, 2020).

Another diversity issue relates to age. In this regard, Regional Managers and their respective Customer Service Managers appear to prefer hiring younger staff for Frontline roles (Interview with Roger on 27^h October, 2020). As one Customer Service Manager put it, 'The DSR space is a great start for young people ... I remember where I came from. Let's get them in early ... I give them that opportunity' (Interview with James on 11^h September, 2020). The preference for hiring 'young' Frontline staff was also stressed by another manager who commented, 'All my team know the type of people I look for ... There are three criteria: young, tech savvy and energetic ... If you employ someone who's 50 and they go, oh, I need to sit down, my feet are killing me, I go, told you so' (Interview with Roger on 27^h October, 2020).

Managerial ranks within Service Centres consist of two levels. Coordinators do the basic operations of the Service Centre, including opening and closing duties, rosters, offering customised solutions to customers and dealing promptly with escalated matters. The second level includes the Service Centre Manager who is responsible for payroll, leave management and general staff related issues, including customer query escalations. In addition, the Service Centre Manager handles staff KPIs related to specific agency agreements. KPIs, include monitoring customer 'wait times' and 'error rates' (Interview with Sam on 28^h October, 2020).

Service Centre Managers are further tasked with ‘community building’ efforts, which involve holding ‘events’ to ‘build a positive public perception’ (Interview with James on 11th September, 2020). A Customer Service Manager explained a recent community partnership by saying that, ‘We were the first Service Centre in NSW to be recognised as autism friendly. We worked with a university in a study. That built up a reputation of, hey, look they are a friendly, approachable organisation’ (Interview with James on 11th September, 2020).

As mentioned, lower ranking Frontline roles include DSR’s, Concierge Staff and Customer Service Representatives who deal directly with customers. As described in Chapter Seven, these employees initially greet customers, issue tickets, escort customers to the various areas within the Service Centre and are generally in ‘problem solving’ mode while working on the ‘dancefloor,’ the Service Centre space where both patrons and staff work together to solve customer problems (Interviews with Vanessa on 21st September, 2020 and Miranda on 5th November, 2020). These key activities are considered BAU, as one staff member stated, ‘What we do on the frontline is pretty consistent day in, day out. We call it Groundhog Day. Here's the pile of crap that gets thrown over the fence ... then, when's the next one coming?’ (Interview with Chelsea on 4th November, 2020). At times of crisis, staff need to ensure that these activities must remain effective because BAU is paramount. One staff member explained the impact on BAU during COVID-19 by saying:

Before COVID, you would walk in the door and take a seat. Now, you can't do that. You stop at the door and you may have to queue outside for a period of time, which is hard for us because we are so customer focused. It's still hard for team members to ask people to wait outside ... Once you're in the Centre, we've got hygiene officers in there wiping down counters throughout the day. We've got screens up at the counters. That

was a really big decision because that was one of the key changes in the layout when we moved from RMS to Service NSW (Interview with Emily on 23^d September, 2020).

These developments increased demands on the Frontline. A Customer Service Representative explained more COVID-19 related constraints as follows:

Our customers are going why are you coming against my civil rights and why should I wear a mask and why can't I come in with my son in this very difficult time? I want to be there, even though they have no participation in the transaction ... If you have that interaction over and over, every single day, it's taxing on your mental health ... I have people that I would normally brush off, oh no, it's just another person having a go. But at the moment, we have so much of that ... It's been difficult to translate that to our executive team to understand. When you talk about it, you don't want to be seen as weak, that you can't deal with it (Interview with Candice on 5^h November, 2020).

During COVID-19, some Frontline staff members were offered the opportunity to work from home. According to a Regional Manager, 'Some Frontline staff had a higher risk, whether they had diabetes or if they were caring for an elderly person. We organised for them to work from home. We sent a kit out to them, trained them up to work from home' (Interview with Barbara on 14^h November, 2020).

To achieve high levels of customer satisfaction, Frontline staff members have to adjust the way they act and present themselves in order to adequately serve the variety of customers who enter each Service Centre. Customers vary in their degree of agreeableness, particularly during times of crisis so Frontline staff have to be extremely careful in how they manage difficult situations.

As one Frontline staff member commented, ‘having a customer come in on the counter, they could be upset and they just want to download. It’s been a huge ordeal for them to get to that point and you have to understand that’ (Interview with Debra on 9^h November, 2020). Another Frontline staff member echoed this sentiment, saying ‘We see lots of customers coming in. We see lots of aggressive customers ... but we ... stay patient, we must be empathetic, we must fit into their shoes’ (Interview with Robyn on 9^h November, 2020).

Frontline staff members must carefully manage any intrapersonal tension they experience while serving customers, suppressing negative emotions and replacing them with positive ones in an attempt to control their customer’s experience. This capability is rewarded by the organisation as an excerpt from an email written to all staff by a Senior Leader demonstrates:

Paul recently took a call from a man in distress who made a comment about suicidal thoughts. Paul took steps to validate and empathise with his customer while displaying true compassion, a non-judgmental attitude and genuineness. He not only made the customer feel that he had been heard and understood, he also provided policy information to help guide his customer. This was an excellent example of managing the customer’s emotions in order to help him understand what needed to happen. Paul has shown time and time again his ability to connect in a meaningful way with customers (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: B).

Such public acknowledgement provides those staff who are performing ‘well’ with greater visibility in the organisation. One Support Office staff member explained the pressure to conform to such visibility particularly through the use of Workplace, a social media website specifically for employees who post work related content by saying:

I always jump on Workplace, hit the reply button and share my congratulations ... I just feel like I need to encourage them, even if I have never worked with this person before. I guess there is that peer pressure thing. You see a million people doing it ... even if they don't know who I am (Interview with Patricia on 8^h September, 2020).

However, most of the interviewees believed that Frontline staff members act in the best interest of the customer for intrinsic reasons. One Support Office staff member commented:

People want to produce quality work. In producing quality work, they end up demonstrating our values which gets them these awards ... Kirk got nominated for the Champ of the Month. He's a very humble guy. I don't think he was like, oh, what can I do to get the Champ of the Month award. I'm one hundred percent sure he wouldn't be thinking like that (Interview with Audrey on 10^h September, 2020).

As mentioned, the performance demands for Frontline staff members are extremely high. Not only do they need to be extremely cautious in times of interpersonal encounters with peers, with who they work, but also with their managers, higher grade Support Office staff and also Executive Leaders and Directors who visit and who are kept in the loop about individual performances on a routine basis. Ultimately, Frontline staff members work under rigid performance measurement mechanisms that are designed to ensure they are reliable in how they deal with customers. Such measurements rely on customer 'feedback machines' and the 'Customer Score Card,' the latter which outlines the 'Big Rocks' of the organisation. Big Rocks for the Frontline are clearly specified under the three pillars: 'People,' 'Customer' and the 'Organisation.' The 'Customer' is weighted at 50%. Frontline staff members are encouraged to 'be obsessed with delivering an outstanding customer experience' (See Appendix VI,

Fieldnotes: G). In addition, Frontline staff members are also expected to 'role model' behaviours. If behavioural standards are not met, they are placed in the red category, notably, 'Does not Demonstrate' and tied to performance management metrics. Measurement of staff performance also involves tracking their movements and actions. A Frontline worker broadly explained the process of tracking by commenting:

Service Centres have got statistics. How many people you serve a day, how quickly they were served at the counter, how long your wait times are, how many digital conversions you got at the front. The digital counters out the front, there's a massive push to try and get that stuff done online. Anything we can do online that frees up space on the counter means you don't have those transactions going to the counter, which then frees up Service NSW to go, OK, we can take on another contract because we've got room to put that over the counter (Interview with Leo on 2nd November, 2020).

One Customer Service Representative offered a detailed account concerning his experience on the Frontline by saying:

The clock is running. Our obligation to the agency is that transactions should finish within 10 minutes ... If you check with the customer about his dog or kids or life and take the transaction to 15 minutes, that's it. You will have somebody from management walk up to you because they can see it's going from amber to red. Those parameters are fed into the system. Anything over 10 minutes, they'll automatically see it going amber. Anything over 15, they'll see it red ... They will ask you in front of the customer 'we've got a queue backed up. Do you want to quickly wrap this up?' You may need to drink water or speak to your colleague about something ... but that's not allowed ... I used

to take two minutes and thirty seconds per transaction for licences ... I just find ways to save time (Interview with Leo on 2nd November, 2020).

Another example was offered by a Frontline staff member who commented, 'lunch breaks are supposed to be 30 minutes which are unpaid. If you come back in thirty-one minutes, they will tell you that you were off by a minute, which means only twenty-eight minutes for lunch' (Interview with Alistair on 3^d November, 2020). If Frontline staff members are not observed to be providing consistently good customer service, if they are feeling 'burnt out' or intrapersonal tension or discontent surface, comments may be made to them by their managers in order to keep up appearances. For instance, a Customer Service Manager reminded his staff during the COVID-19 crisis, 'I keep telling my staff every day, "don't forget the person you annoy today, when COVID is all over, they're going to be back to pay their rego and they're going to be rude to you because you were rude and frustrated to them now. They won't forget"' (Interview with James on 11^h September, 2020).

The Frontline is also responsible for delivering high levels of customer satisfaction for all Service NSW partner agencies. For this reason, Frontline staff are the primary recipients of the organisation's ideological formulations. They are at the lowest levels of the organisation's structure, most culturally and linguistically diverse, least educated, worst paid, and rigidly time tracked. While promises are made to them by senior leaders, those 'promises' do not always come to fruition, as one manager commented:

So, [they] meet with one person in a Service Centre and that person goes, 'wouldn't it be nice to have child care in each Service Centre. [They] started this whole project on finding out how to put in child care ... It went nowhere because physically we don't

have the premises to provide it ... We don't have the room. We don't have the structure ... The next one [they] did were pets in workplace. Someone said, 'wouldn't it be nice to bring a dog to work?' The next thing we go down the path of putting all the energy in finding out how we can have pets in the workplace and checking leases out (Interview with Roger on 27^h October, 2020).

In relation to a host of Service Centre staff initiatives that failed to get off the ground, one manager commented, 'you get the idea, lots of talk' (Interview with Jamie on 21^s October, 2020). The Frontline hold the least power in the organisation yet the dramaturgical demands on them are extremely high. These dramaturgical demands are exacerbated during times of immense structural change as well as during global and State emergencies. In short, Frontline staff members are the ultimate subjects of the organisation's ideological formulations who are required to dramaturgically manage themselves not only in relation to customers, but also toward all other membership groups of the organisation.

Conclusion to Chapter Eight

This chapter discussed the various membership groups within the organisation, including the Executive Leaders and Directors, Support Office staff members and the Frontline. Executive Leaders and Directors are the organisation's primary agents of normative control (Kunda, 2009). Support Office staff members fluctuate most between being both agents and subjects of normative control (Kunda, 2009) due to being conduits between Executive Directors, Senior Management and the Frontline. Frontline staff members are considered the primary subjects of normative control (Kunda, 2009) as these employees are the primary recipients of the organisation's ideological formulations. The next chapter expands the ethnographic and qualitative data to show how ideological formulations and forms of normative control direct

employee performance displays through the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture on the front stage (Goffman, 1959) at various sites of enactment (Van Maanen, 1979).

Chapter Nine

Ideology, Normative Control, The Integrationist

Perspective of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ Culture and *Front*

Stage Sites of Enactment

Introduction

The Chapter uses the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) to analyse of the organisation’s ideological formulations, its various forms of normative control along with the underlying assumptions, values and various front stage (Goffman, 1959) presentation ritual that are utilised by agents of normative control (Kunda, 2009) to enforce, reinforce and change their subject’s behaviour, both cognitively and affectively to align with the organisation’s ‘DNA’ culture. To this end, Goffman’s (1959) front stage and Van Maanen’s (1979) scenes, encounters and relationships are used to present and analyse this thesis’ various *Front Stage Sites of Enactment*.

The first section outlines the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture at two levels of analysis. At one level, the organisation is the ‘partner of choice’ for the NSW government dealing with State emergencies, such as bushfires and floods. At another level, Service NSW is heavily concerned with its employees where Executive Leaders and Directors and other managers in positions of authority manage the behavioural norms of their subjects via various forms of normative control (Kunda, 2009). The combination of these efforts, it is argued, create schematic images of social order (Geertz, 1973) across all membership groups within the organisation while concurrently tying the emotions and commitment of employees to the organisation.

The second section addresses other forms of normative control, notably, the organisation's prescribed values, including teamwork, passion and accountability. Here, too, attention is given to how these values were built and positively reinforced into the organisation's 'DNA' through 'Building Blocks' (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: H), with each building block relating to the organisation's strategic outcomes. The third section outlines several examples of the organisation's formal presentation rituals, including the process of acquiring membership within the organisation. Here, attention is given to the interview process where interviewees must show dramaturgical alignment with the organisation's prescribed culture in order to acquire membership. In addition, this section examines the strategies deployed to 'encourage' staff members to adopt the organisation's formal presentation rituals as conveyed and reinforced through formal trainings and meetings. The fourth section addresses how staff member behaviour is monitored, reinforced and corrected according to the norms of the organisation's dominant culture.

This chapter argues that the cumulative effects of these mechanisms provide staff members with clear boundaries within which to display the self on the front stage (Goffman, 1959) in alignment with the organisation's ideology (Geertz, 1973; Barely & Kunda, 1992) and its prescribed 'DNA' culture. In short, this chapter outlines the means by which normative control (Kunda, 2009) is practiced through presentation ritual. From this perspective, presentation rituals are designed to enforce and reinforce *Front Stage Self Displays* to ensure that staff demonstrate their alignment with the organisation's 'DNA' culture. Lastly, this chapter highlights the direct challenge to the Service NSW 'DNA' culture as a result of the machinery of government changes with the introduction of the Department of Customer Service and the Shared Corporate Services model. To begin this discussion, the underlying assumptions of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture are addressed.

Assumptions of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ Culture

As introduced in Chapter Six, the organisation’s ideological influencers serve as agents of normative control who encourage staff members to align their sense of self with the organisation’s interests and its customer centric ethos, which it is argued, is underpinned by an employee’s positive orientation to the organisation’s mission and vision. This chapter argues that the organisation’s leaders encourage staff to align themselves closely with its interests, and by doing so, elicits, channels and directs how employees display themselves on in *Front Stage Self Displays* while carrying out their work. As highlighted in Chapter Three, the various institutionalised language used by employees provide a valuable means for analysing aspects of the organisation’s ‘DNA’ culture. For instance, Service NSW is said to be “‘fair,’ ‘family orientated,’ ‘shares success,’ ‘a great place to learn and develop’ ‘supportive,’ ‘open,’ ‘fun,’ ‘values differences’ and ‘inclusivity’ (Interviews with: Caroline on 25^h February, 2020; Audrey on 10^h September, 2020; Chelsea on 4^h November, 2020; Natalia on 9^h October, 2020; and Robyn on 9^h November, 2020). One Regional Manager explained, ‘The culture in Service NSW is generally very good ... One of the best, you know, cultures that I’ve been involved with. We celebrate successes really well (Interview with Barbara on 14^h November, 2020). Similarly, a Frontline staff member commented, ‘We respect each other ... Everyone is supportive. If I ask for help from anyone, they reply to me straight away. It doesn't matter for them who I am ... It's a family environment’ (Interview with Stan on 8^h October, 2020).

The assumptions of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture reflect the organisation’s ideology through the words, deeds and actions that both agents and subjects of normative control (Kunda, 2009) make in carrying out their work on the front stage (Goffman, 1959). These various forms of normative control are used by the organisation’s primary agents of normative control to promulgate schematic images of social order (Geertz, 1973), evident through the use of the

organisation's institutionalised language, including narratives that employees are encouraged to accept as part of their self-definition while working for the organisation. The chapter now examines the customer centric ideology and the way that staff manifest the organisation's various forms of normative control on the front stage (Goffman, 1959). To this end, various dimensions of the 'DNA' culture are identified commencing with a discussion regarding the organisation's values.

Organisational Values

As outlined in Chapter Five, in line with neoliberal ideology and Post New Public Management (PNPM) practice, the Service NSW vision is to be 'the leader in transactional services for the NSW community' (Service NSW, 2012-13; 2014-15; 2015-16). As mentioned, Service NSW created cultural 'Building Blocks.' Referred to as the organisation's 'DNA', these building blocks consist of the organisation's vision, mission, values, advocated strategic outcomes and the organisation's Service Value Chain. The value chain encompasses its staff and its customers.

The organisational values espoused by Service NSW as outlined in its annual reports promote: *passion, accountability* and *teamwork*. *Passion* relates to providing a great customer experience; *Accountability* refers to creating value and taking ownership of the end-to-end customer experience; and *Teamwork* relates to employees working together to deliver positive customer outcomes. Service NSW is claimed to be:

Aligned to our values of *Teamwork, Passion and Accountability*. We operate as one team with one common purpose for our customers. We are committed to ensuring staff recruited both within and outside the public sector have the capabilities and

characteristics to successfully perform their role and deliver a new era of quality customer service to the community. We seek to recruit people who are professional, outcomes-focused and keen to create a great place to work and visit; people who are team players and who will own the customer experience from beginning to end, going the extra mile to make a difference. This includes taking initiative and focusing on continuous improvement for our teams and our customers. A key component to our success is recruiting people on merit who are passionate about customer service, who demonstrate our DNA and our values and those who have the skills and qualities to deliver the Service NSW vision. Our People Development Strategy includes providing a suite of learning and leadership options that meet the needs of our people across all channels and support the growing needs of the business. We foster talent, harness and grow capabilities and prepare for the future. We create an environment that supports learning and innovation that responds flexibly to staff learning needs and values diversity and inclusiveness (Service NSW, 2012-13; 2014-15; 2015-16; 2017; 2018).

These values are readily recalled by staff. To illustrate, a Support Office staff member commented, ‘you would have heard by now ... teamwork, passion and accountability, we live by that and its revisited regularly. It’s the Service NSW DNA’ (Interview with James on 11^h September, 2020). In a similar vein, a Customer Service Manager stressed, ‘the DNA: teamwork, passion and accountability. I should read it off the wall ... that's repeated a lot’ (Interview with Miranda on 5^h November, 2020). Another Customer Service Manager explained, ‘all my team, they are so passionate, they love what they do, day in day out. They love serving customers’ (Interview with Candice on 5^h November, 2020).

This rhetoric affects how staff reflect on work relationships. Hence, a Training Leader commented that sharing successes and having opportunities was ‘definitely based on teamwork’ which was ‘definitely a key value within the Service NSW culture and what makes the Service NSW culture so great’ (Interview with Audrey on 10^h September, 2020). In a similar vein, a Customer Service Manager commented that, ‘The accountability has to be on point. If we're going to be known as world leaders in customer service, you have to be accountable for what you do. Head Office do that, they acknowledge if something's going wrong. We learn from mistakes’ (Interview with James on 11^h September, 2020).

The issue of accountability as an organisational value was highlighted by a Director when she explained the importance of all three organisational values by saying:

I think about our DNA: teamwork, passionate and accountability ... they are all important, but I think the reason why we are so strong is because our teams are accountable. That's not just accountable for the customer experience, but they're accountable for their whole centre outcomes (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020).

As mentioned, the organisation’s ‘Service Value Chain’ represents two continuous feedback cycles. The first feedback cycle is concerned with external stakeholders, notably, the organisation’s partner agencies and customers. According to the Service NSW DNA Culture Building Blocks documentation, the organisation’s partner agencies are bound by two values: ‘Excellent Partner Experiences’ and ‘High Quality for Value Services.’ The organisation’s customers are also bound by two specific values, ‘Outstanding Customer Experience’ and ‘Customer Satisfaction.’ The second feedback cycle is concerned with internal organisational

and employee operations. In relation to the organisation, the values are underpinned by: ‘Organisational Systems,’ ‘Leadership and Culture,’ and ‘Internal Service Delivery.’ In relation to the organisation’s employees, the values are underpinned by ‘Employee Commitment,’ ‘Employee Retention’ and ‘Employee Productivity.’ Thus, the ‘DNA’ includes the aforementioned Mission, Vision, Service Value Chain and the organisation’s values. These ‘DNA’ culture building blocks are claimed to relate to six strategic outcomes for Service NSW as follows:

Autonomy: commercially robust business.

Digital: government digital agenda through a culture of innovation.

Growth: business sustainably.

Relationships: strengthening ties with communities and partnerships.

Team: world class team that attracts and retains the best talent.

Culture: unique and valuable culture ... (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: H)

These strategic outcomes are underpinned by a range of People and Culture policies and practices, including the Service NSW Code of Conduct and other compliance and technical guidelines. Additionally, the advocacy of inclusivity helps to create a positive impression of the espoused organisation’s culture. As one Executive Leader commented:

It’s a culture of inclusion. It’s a culture of respect and it’s a culture of trust. Those three things make it distinctly different to anywhere else ... It’s a culture where we all band together to get the job done to have a positive outcome for customers. Everybody is committed to that outcome. It’s not, tick, done. It’s around caring about the impact,

the outcome ... and how we can make a positive difference for our people, our staff and our customers (Interview with Anastasia on 19^h October, 2020).

The values are displayed by staff while performing their work in front of others reflecting cultural alignment with the organisation's customer centric ethos. Next, the focus of this discussion expands upon the organisation's forms of normative control (Kunda, 2009) by examining employee behaviour on the front stage (Goffman, 1959).

Normative Control and *Front Stage Self Displays*

This section examines the organisation's culture in relation to various forms of normative control (Kunda, 2009) from the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001). Specifically, this section discusses how agents and subjects of normative control engage in *Front Stage Self Displays*. As mentioned, it is argued, that on the front stage (Goffman, 1959) employees have come to 'learn,' 'trust' and 'enjoy' working for the organisation (Interviews with Audrey 10^h September, 2020 and Josephine 17^h September, 2020). How these particular forms of normative control affect the subjective experience of staff members on the front stage (Goffman, 1959) is now of concern. In this regard, attention is given to the way the organisation elicits and directs 'the required efforts of staff members by controlling their underlying experiences, thoughts and feelings that guide their actions' to 'act in the best interest of the company, not because they are physically coerced, nor purely from an instrumental concern with economic rewards and sanctions' but rather because they are 'driven by internal commitment, strong identification with company goals and intrinsic satisfaction from work' in direct response to 'a variety of managerial appeals, exhortations and actions' (Kunda, 2009: 11).

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Goffman's (1959) conceptualisation of the 'front stage' and Kunda's concept of 'presentation rituals' which encompass 'mechanisms through which certain organisational members influence how other members are to think and feel' (2009: 93) frame the following treatment of *Site of Enactment - Front Stage Self Displays*. In this *Site of Enactment*, 'the self' witnesses its *Front Stage Self Display*, in situ, a display that aligns with the organisation's ideology and its various forms of normative control. However, the degree to which this display may feel 'real' to 'the self' is questionable. In other words, *Front Stage Self Displays* may be perceived by the self as real, not real or somewhere in between depending on the degree of self-consciousness. One Executive Director illustrated a *Front Stage Self Display* by saying:

I really feel like I'm a bit of a freedom fighter, like going into battle about resources or funding for our customers ... That's why I was so passionate about these Mobile Service Centres. I advocated for them for like a good two years before they even got into the Execs thought process. That was all about timing. We were coming up to an election, we had some money and we got the Premier and the Minister to say, 'yes, scope it out and do it' (Interview with Elise on 11th October, 2020).

Another *Site of Enactment* is the *Front Stage Self Display for Others* which relates to the extent to which individuals witness their own *Front Stage Self Display for Others*, in situ, and in line with the organisation's ideology and its various forms of normative control. Similar to *Front Stage Self Displays*, the degree to which *Front Stage Self Displays for Others* is perceived as being real by the self, is questionable. In other words, *Front Stage Self Displays for Others* may be perceived by the self as real, not real or somewhere in between. A senior manager illustrated a *Front Stage Self Display for Others* when describing her feelings concerning the work of a colleague who covered her role during her maternity leave by saying, 'I don't want to get in the way because you were

was so good at it. You are amazing and everybody loves you. You've done such a great job. I just don't feel like I can fill your shoes (Interview with Josephine on 17^h September, 2020). In *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*, employees are to interpret the meaning and intent behind what is being contrived toward them which suggests alignment to the organisation's ideology and its prescribed culture.

In line with the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001), *Front Stage Self Displays* and *Front Stage Self Displays for Others* at Service NSW recur in wide-ranging everyday ritual gatherings where the organisation's ideology (Barely & Kunda, 1992) and various forms of normative control (Kunda, 2009) are displayed by employees across the organisation's various membership groups while they perform their work in public view. However, as outlined in Chapter Three, it is important to remember that the meaning of presentation ritual is context dependent (Kunda, 2009) as will be discussed further in Chapters Ten and Eleven.

The data indicates the extent to which the boundary between employees' real selves and their organisational selves has blurred in this 'DNA' culture and that it promotes the organisation's interests over others. As one Support Office staff member explained, 'Working at Service NSW is really part of your identity and who you are. I am unashamedly myself. It's just real. I can't put my finger on it' (Interview with Josephine 17^h September, 2020). As this statement illustrates, the organisation's agents of normative control (Kunda, 2009) can and do make claims upon the subject experience of staff members and how they see themselves, and how they present themselves in various *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*. To explain this phenomenon in detail, attention now turns to three *Front Stage Self Displays* that both agents and subjects of normative control present while in the view of others, notably, *The Front Stage Engaged Self*, *The*

Front Stage Empowered Self and *The Front Stage Authentic Self*. The discussion begins by exploring the ethnographic and qualitative data which supports the *Front Stage Engaged Self*.

The Front Stage Engaged Self

The *Front Stage Engaged Self* reflects a strong belief in meaningful work, one which is closely tied to the duty of staff to help their customers solve problems. Several participants across the Executive Leadership Team, the Support Office and the Frontline explained the engaged and meaningful orientation staff members display as part of their role by saying:

Our culture was built on taking customer's problem and solving it. Doesn't matter what it is. Doesn't matter whether it's a NSW State transaction, whether it's a private request, even if all they want is to find a map (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020).

I think that is really empowering for someone who's passionate about serving people (Interview with Nicole on 15^h March, 2020). Staff are given freedom to help that person regardless of whether it's on our books or on someone else's books (Interview with Audrey on 10^h September, 2020).

I think that's why we've been able to recruit people who are the right cultural fit for us, because they will go above and beyond and they won't expect remuneration for it. They just do it out of their own moral compass (Interview with Grace on 11^h July, 2020).

These statements illustrate how employees display a strong *Front Stage Engaged Self*, a presentation of self that reflects a deep desire and passion to help customers in alignment with the organisation's vision and mission and its customer centric ideology.

The Front Stage Empowered Self

Another *Front Stage Self Display for Others* involves the projection of an image to others inside and outside of the organisation that reflects a distinctly unique social reality. Specifically, this image is one that projects an impression of greater employee empowerment than is the case at other public sector agencies. Both agents and subjects of normative control believe that both the organisation's vision, mission and its customer centric ethos are 'unique' for the public sector.

According to a number of employees, the organisation's 'unique' image starkly contrasts with other front facing, slow-paced, rule bound government bureaucracies (Interviews with: Pamela on 2nd November 2020; Chelsea 4^h November 2020; Natalia on 9^h November, 2020; and Barbara on 14^h November, 2020), a view that, at times, conveys an 'us' versus 'them' mentality. As one Support Office manager reflected:

I don't think other government departments say we're going to put the customer last. We're going to make it so complicated that the customer ends up pulling out their hair and just gives up ... it has been driven by policy rather than by customer outcome or customer journey. I think if you said, 'OK ... these are all the complexities you've put in place around the customer journey,' if you showed it to them, broken it down from a customer point of view, they would be appalled and realise what they're doing to their customer ... That's the difference between them and us. We put the customer first (Interview with Chelsea on 4^h November, 2020).

Indeed, two interviewees felt they were 'different' and 'special' because they worked for a public sector organisation that did not tie them down by complex, inflexible, impractical and overwhelming rigid bureaucratic structures and processes (Interviews with Joanne on 21st

March, 2020 and Crystal on 12^h November, 2020). This perspective creates the impression that employees are empowered by the organisation to contribute something meaningfully toward the fulfilment of the organisation's mission and vision. As one Support Office staff member explained, 'other government departments don't self-criticise, they don't care about feedback, people don't matter and it's too hard to influence from within.' The same participant also commented that 'People quit and stay and just keep collecting their pay packet ... At Service NSW, we just get in and do our job and we are rewarded with learning and career advancements if we perform well' (Interview with Barbara on 14^h November, 2020).

Service NSW employees demonstrate through their work an alignment with Post New Public Management practise. In this regard, employees of Service NSW 'show initiative,' 'work flexibly' and 'autonomously' in order to 'take immediate action' toward 'solving organisational problems' and to demonstrate 'continuous improvement' while 'exceeding customer expectations' (Interviews with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020 and Barbara on 14^h November, 2020). An intern commented on his experience of the public sector prior to joining the organisation and explained how the fast-paced environment of Service NSW empowered him by saying:

I had a crap six months at procurement ... A lot of things are standardised. You can't really negotiate because you are in government ... They keep telling you to negotiate ... but you're not negotiating, you are bound by this agreement. There is a lot of form filling ... I found it very slow, that's why I came to Service NSW because I enjoy having that fast-paced environment ... Whereas in other departments, there are runs of management you need to go through ... lots of approvals (Interview with Steve on 10^h March, 2020).

Employees who do not consistently present a *Front Stage Empowered Self*, potentially face performance management consequences, as one manager explained, ‘She was being very vocal about what had happened on Workplace and not being helpful or presenting information in a positive way ... she ended up getting performance managed (Interview with Evangeline on 15th November, 2020). In fact, *Front Stage Empowered Display* breaches are not always the fault of subjects of normative control as illustrated by the following account from a Support Office staff member who commented on a fellow staff member’s inadequate *Front Stage Empowered Display* on the Frontline, ‘sometimes people are given tasks that are clearly out of their scope because they're not trained on something, but they're still given that and set up to fail (Interview with Leo on 2nd November, 2020).

The Front Stage Authentic Self

Another routine self-presentation is the *Front Stage Authentic Self* which refers to the encouragement of staff to present a self that reflects what *they* think, believe and feel: that is, a display that denies boundaries between a staff member’s real self and the various presentations they display at work. One manager stressed that, ‘It is a very important part of our culture to be yourself’ (Interview with Josephine on 17th September, 2020). Another Support Office manager explained, ‘it's much more about being your authentic self here’ (Interview with Barbara on 14th November, 2020). Another Director echoed the above sentiment by saying:

You are really encouraged to be your authentic self and part of that is being able to play at work and have fun ... I'm thinking mostly about our Service Centres, because that's where I spend most of my time ... It might be a little bit childish, but making tasks into games, turning things like targets and KPI's into a fun way that everyone can be

involved and participate ... Like having a team mentality, but also then having a personal best (Interview with Elise on 11th October, 2020).

This strong connection promoted for employees to tie their emotions and commitment to the organisation by presenting a variety of *Front Stage Self Displays* reflect the way the organisation's ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992) and its customer centric 'DNA' culture exerts normative control (Kunda, 2009) by creating, enforcing, reinforcing and legitimising schematic images of the organisation's social reality and its social order (Geertz, 1973). The next section discusses the way both agents and subjects of normative control engage in *Front Stage Self Displays* through other various presentation rituals (Kunda, 2009) and sites of enactment (Van Maanen, 1979).

Presentation Ritual

As mentioned in Chapter Three, presentation ritual is a strong symbolic form of normative control used by agents who aim to bind their subject's emotions and commitment to the organisation. Such rituals, according to Kunda provide:

Occasions where participants, speaking as agents for the corporate interest, use familiar symbols presentational devices, stylised forms of expression, company slogans and artefacts to articulate, illustrate and exemplify what members in good standing are to think, feel and do. In short, these gatherings are where the organisational ideology and the member role it prescribes, is dramatised and brought to life (Kunda, 2009: 92-3).

How do agents of normative control within the organisation invite their subjects to elicit, channel and direct their energies and activities through formal presentation rituals? In the next section, Goffman's (1959) front stage and Van Maanen's (1979) scenes are used to demonstrate

the way presentation rituals work to bind staff emotions and commitment to the organisation through various *Sites of Enactment* and to interpret how staff members perform in *Front Stage Scenes*.

Site of Enactment - Front Stage Scenes

In line with the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001), this thesis argues that in *Front Stage Scenes*, staff members present a *Front Stage Display* that is aligned with the organisation's ideology (Barley & Kunda, 1992) and its prescribed culture. In this regard, *Front Stage Scenes* involve both agents and subjects of normative control. In *Front Stage Scenes*, agents of normative control display selves that reflects ideal membership and a model for behaviour. In *Front Stage Scenes*, agents of normative control use narratives to communicate about themselves or others, typically in relation to the organisation's interests. Agents of normative control may make the occasional joke, offer congratulations, or make pre-emptive statements as part of their presentation in order to elicit a desired response from audience members. Agents of normative control are typically well prepared before they enter a *Front Stage Scene*.

To illustrate a *Front Stage Scene*, Service NSW hold annual leadership conferences and award ceremonies where internal sources of ideological influence, in other words, agents of normative control, emphasise the organisation's communal nature by speaking in the collective interest in their own 'authentic' style. In the context of such formal presentation ritual, ideological influencers demonstrate what it means to be an exemplar employee of the organisation through acts, presentations and speeches made on behalf of the organisation. From this perspective, agents of normative control present themselves with dramaturgical care, evident through the selection of their words, deeds and actions. This is made evident from fieldnotes taken during the organisation's Refugee Graduation Ceremony:

The Refugee Graduation ceremony began with an Acknowledgement to Country to honour the original custodians of the land. The Secretary for the Department of Customer Service together with the Service NSW CEO were called to the stage, 'We are so proud of our new graduates.' The audience applauded each graduate as the Secretary issued all 19 recipients with their awards. The Secretary announced, one by one, the name, the training and skillsets of each recipient. The audience clapped, commented and laughed at the little jokes the Secretary made along the way. As she reached for her last certificate, smudging her mascara 'I'm tearing up,' she said, while offering a little smile and giggle to cement the symbolic nature of her gracious act (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: L).

As illustrated above, in *Front Stage Scenes*, subjects of normative control may smile, laugh, nod, make pithy comments or ask questions in an effort to demonstrate dramaturgical loyalty to other staff present. In essence, both agents and subjects of normative control seek to maintain, reinforce and legitimise their membership within the organisation. During these occasions, degrees of self-consciousness are high for both agents and subjects of normative control. However, if a display breach is made by an agent of normative control, the potential repercussions for membership are higher. For instance, a loss of respect, relevancy and ultimately one's level of ideological authority may be in question. To illustrate, one Support Office member commented on a breach made by the Service NSW CEO by saying:

While he tells us in leadership conferences ... and in DNA sessions ... that our customers are our number one priority, then why has he removed himself from being on the Frontline? ... I mean, it's a bloody crisis and he is nowhere to be seen during COVID (Interview with Roger on 27^h October, 2020).

If display breaches are made by subjects of normative control in *Front Stage Scenes*, if severe enough, a subject's membership may be questioned, if not revoked. As one manager commented on a subject's breach during a meeting, 'we did notice it was happening ... [she] was saying the same thing over and over again, you know, multiple times without any kind of solution ... One of the Regional Managers said we are going to have a conversation about it with [her] ... there's a better way to achieve the outcome we want ... and [she] is not going about in the best manner ... she left (Interview with Evangeline on 15^h September, 2020). As the data demonstrates, private conversations are held amongst members with high degrees of ideological authority to secure the fate of employees who are not reflecting desirable *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*. Lastly, *Front Stage Scenes* include occasions such as conferences, presentations and ceremonies of various sorts. Attendance is not mandatory, rather both agents and subjects of normative control mostly enter *Front Stage Scenes* for the purposes of maintaining membership legitimacy and hence, for the purposes of self-interest.

As discussed, employees seem engaged and believe in the meaningful sentiment of their work, a sentiment which is claimed to induce a strong sense of commitment derived from the pleasure of serving customers and solving their problems. Thus, in *Front Stage Scenes*, the organisation's social reality is built upon a positive reinforcing structure of dramaturgical loyalty in alignment with the organisation's ideology and its prescribed culture. Attention now turns to identifying how staff members acquire, maintain and reinforce their membership in the organisation and how they affirm their membership to be aligned with the organisation's ideology and its 'DNA' culture in *Front Stage Encounters*.

Site of Enactment – Front Stage Encounters

In *Front Stage Encounters*, one way of identifying how staff members acquire, maintain and reinforce their membership in the organisation to be aligned with the organisation's ideology and its 'DNA' culture is through the hiring and interview process. The reasons why people seek employment with Service NSW vary considerably. Some staff wish to embark upon a career that is 'secure,' in other words, 'once you are in, you are in' (Interview with James on 11^h September, 2020). Others because there are 'strong foundations in government' (Interview with Audrey on 10^h September, 2020). Some pursue employment at Service NSW because they have family members who work there and 'they love the conditions,' such as flexible leave and the belief that 'the government sector looks after you' (Interview with Debra on 9^h November, 2020). One Customer Service Manager explained, 'In government, things will change with whoever is elected every four years, but at least you know everyone is still going to pay their car registrations and that the doors will always be open' (Interview with James on 11^h September, 2020). This state of affairs provided this interviewee with employment security. As he put it, 'I am glad I made that step many years ago. And during COVID, one thing people need is a job. I'm very lucky' (Interview with James on 11^h September, 2020).

Another reason why many people sought employment with Service NSW relates to the previous experience of working in other public sector organisations. In this regard, a Support Office staff member commented:

Once you are in that job you are stuck there forever, particularly in a regional or remote country town. There is no opportunity to keep moving around. I don't want to be stuck in the same job for twenty-five years, surely there is a bit more to life. Most public sector organisations are the same for 50 odd years. At Service NSW, it's different, you keep

developing and move around depending on your growth needs (Interview with Audrey on 10^h September, 2020).

Others joined Service NSW because the organisation offered them an opportunity to be at the ‘cutting edge’ of the public sector. An Executive Director commented:

Service NSW is building, expanding, redesigning and recreating what government is to the citizens of NSW. While other government departments are scaling back and consolidating, Service NSW is building something new and fresh, adding value and impacting the people and the community which gives us meaning and purpose rather than just going through the motions (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020).

A Regional Manager echoed this sentiment by saying:

I heard about the culture. I heard it was amazing. I was looking for something that I could connect with emotionally ... Someone I’ve worked with in the past worked at the organisation. She had worked with me in a previous company ... I noticed she was really enjoying what she was doing (Interview with Chelsea on 4^h November, 2020).

Some wished to avoid the private sector because it ‘can be a bit dodgy’ whereas, in the public sector ‘things are always done by the book’ (Interview with Audrey on 10^h September, 2020). An interviewee who had been a Finance Manager explained, ‘When I came here, it probably took 6 months to understand and adapt to the DNA and the leadership style, which is like chalk and cheese’ (Interview with Jamie on 21^s October, 2020).

As the data above illustrates, in *Front Stage Encounters*, agents of normative control communicate by way of narrative about themselves and others, typically in relation to the organisation's interests. In addition, in *Front Stage Encounters*, agents of normative control formally invite subjects of normative control to engage in the encounter. For instance, agents of normative control may ask questions or deliberately engage in dialogue with external others to elicit engagement. To illustrate, one hiring manager asked questions about the interviewee's perspectives about the organisation's culture by saying, 'they have to like Service NSW, they have to like the vibe' (Interview with Roger on 27^h October, 2020). One Training Manager commented, 'When I hire people, I only hire people for culture and team fit. That for me is the top priority. I ask about that because I can teach the rest ... Behaviour is the number one thing ... Honestly, it's the best team I have ever worked in, ever' (Interview with Pamela on 2nd November, 2020). One Customer Service Manager depicted the 'mindset' he looks for in *Front Stage Encounters* when hiring by saying:

We recruit the right people with that Kaizen mindset of continuous improvement. We test people's resilience, how it works, how flexible they are and how 'outside of the box' they think. Every new staff member I have taken on, the young ones, they're tech savvy. They want to learn, they want to know everything yesterday and that's what I want. I encourage that (Interview with James on 11^h September, 2020).

Further insight was provided that reflects a *Front Stage Encounter* by an Executive Director's description of the structured interview process:

The questions that get asked are around the customer and that is very heavy for Frontline roles ... Our performance scorecards include behaviours. One side of the

scorecard is around Key Performance Indicators and performance measures. What does that behaviour look like in terms of the customer, the organisations and the team? There are examples of how we want to see that customer flavour come through in interviews. It's repeated a number of times through the process ... For Support Office roles, we ask questions around responsiveness, inclusion and stakeholder engagement ... The questions are behavioural based ... 'give me an example.' Questions to see if the person has experience doing this type of work. There are ref checks where we ask questions around customer interactions and customer service (Interview with Vanessa on 21st September, 2020).

As these accounts indicate, successful recruitment is largely affected by the extent to which the interviewee's *Front Stage Encounter* aligns with the customer centric ideology and espoused culture of the organisation. In this regard, in *Front Stage Encounters*, subjects of normative control respond thoughtfully to questions asked of them and may offer quite serious commentary concerning perspectives of themselves or others or issues relating to the organisation itself. Because the atmosphere can vary from one moment to the next: from friendly, to serious and everything in between, social niceties also prevail in these encounters evident through the odd joke, laugh, nod, or pithy statement to suggest cognitive and emotional congruence between agent and subject. To illustrate, one Support Officer staff member recalled his own recruitment by saying:

The trait, I can't put my finger on it, but they can sense something in you, that you would give good customer value. It's not just having a smile and saying yes to the customer for everything. Sometimes you may have to refuse a customer's request to do a transaction. It is the trait, how to deal with a yes or no in a way that doesn't make the

customer feel uncomfortable ... They try and hire people who have that positive can-do attitude, a bit of a workaholic. Its reinforced from the leadership, top down ... People who are really willing to put in those hours and that effort (Interview with Leo on 2nd November, 2020).

Generally, in *Front Stage Encounters*, agents of normative control are seeking to maintain, reinforce or further the legitimacy of their membership. In *Front Stage Encounters*, subjects of normative control are also seeking to maintain, reinforce or further their membership legitimacy within the organisation or may use such encounters to convince agents of normative control that acquiring membership, on their part, is well deserved. As one Frontline staff member commented during a *Front Stage Encounter*:

I was so happy when I got the job because I love to mingle with my customers. I love to mingle with my team. I don't want to be you know, away from here. I want to show them I'm part of it because the Service Centre is such a lovely place to work ... I'm really humble to my Service Centre where it is giving me bread and butter, whatever the pay ... I'm very humble to my management, to my leadership team, everyone (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: E).

In *Front Stage Encounters*, degrees of self-consciousness are high for both agents and subjects of normative control. Similar to *Front Stage Scenes*, In *Front Stage Encounters*, display breaches by an agent of normative control carries severe potential repercussions. For instance, a loss of respect, relevancy and ultimately their level of ideological authority may be in question. To illustrate again, while the Service NSW CEO emits a customer centric ethos, during one of the CEO's *Front Stage Encounters*, several participants later commented that his visibility and proximity to

the Frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic had decreased (Interviews with: Natalia on 9^h October, 2020; Cathy on 11^h October, 2020; and Elise on 11^h October, 2020). As one Director, commented:

He met with my [team] and one of them is very bold and he said, ‘Can I just give you some feedback? The teams are missing seeing you on the Frontline.’ His response, which did him more damage than good, ‘you know, I suffer from asthma, so I’ve not been going out’... Asthma isn’t even on the list of vulnerable people ... We’ve got people working on the Frontline that have got bloody asthma serving customers day in, day out ... They lost a lot of respect for him after that call (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020).

In *Front Stage Encounters*, if display breaches are made by subjects of normative control, acquiring membership may be questioned, possibly denied or revoked, as illustrated by one Support Office member who commented on one of her earlier work experiences:

It happened to me ... my substantive role was with one Director. They didn’t want anything to do with me ... I sent them an email saying, ‘I’m sorry’ ... But they completely ignored me ... They were trying to get rid of me. They had meetings without talking to me about it ... and then I was forced to move (Interview with Crystal on 12^h November, 2020).

As the data above illustrates, in *Front Stage Encounters*, display breaches made on behalf of agents and subjects of normative control can and do compromise membership legitimacy, with such display breaches being discreetly discussed by external others. In addition, agents of normative

control can use *Front Stage Encounters* to elicit staff member support for organisational ends, to control any perceived threats of dissent by silencing or closing down a line of dialogue and only embark on debates that are assumed to be won by them in alignment with the organisation's interest as illustrated by one manager who commented:

There was one particular project that I worked on where ... as a strong, smart woman, that was not appreciated ... In meetings, it was very much somebody who liked to micromanage and control ... [they were] much happier working with people who did as they were told ... anybody who questioned or challenged, as you've seen me do, that did not go down well (Interview with Shirley on 28^h September, 2020).

In line with the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001), the following discussion now turns to both agents and subjects of normative control and the way that they enforce and reinforce the organisation's social reality through *Front Stage Encounters* such as the organisation's formal training programs.

Formal training programs are used to enforce, reinforce and legitimise employee membership for cultural 'DNA' alignment which are delivered in a way that conveys prescriptions and descriptions of expected rules for behaviour (Van Maanen, 1976) to new staff members. Newcomers learn how to adapt to the organisation's ideology and its various normative control measures. It is through training that new employees learn the necessary skills to perform their work in various *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*. It is in this context the 'Living the Service NSW DNA' is inculcated into new staff members by prescribing cultural norms and expectations. In addition, it is through such occasions that new staff members come to learn about the expectations to display engaged, empowered and authentic *Front Stage Self Displays*.

Living the Service NSW DNA

Living the Service NSW DNA is a one-day induction held several times per year and is compulsory for all new starters. The program is carefully planned with a well-defined structure that includes but is not limited to an outline of the organisation's history, its business interests, its products and services and most importantly, its 'DNA' culture.

Samantha, the trainer on the day I attended to conduct field work, welcomed all the newly hired staff into the Barlow room, a breakout space often used for training, by saying:

Welcome to Service NSW and congratulations. You have joined a family. I like to say it's one team, one dream here at Service NSW ... Service NSW has high standards with our customers and the end-to-end experience ... When we interview, we are looking for behaviours, your interview questions were based on behaviours ... We listen to new staff from diverse backgrounds in order to enhance our services. You are the newest group of people and hearing what you have to say is really important to us so that we can get better. There is always room for improvement ... and remember, you can approach any leader in Service NSW (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: C).

A total of twenty-eight new employees attended this DNA session with most destined to become Frontline staff. Australia had just experienced unprecedented bushfires and Service NSW was hiring Bushfire Customer Care Specialists to help support the crisis in regional and rural communities. Other Frontline staff members included 'tech savvy Digis,' Concierge staff as well as Customer Service Representatives. Although, only five or so staff members seemed to be over the age of 50, the group appeared to be culturally and linguistically diverse.

Samantha instructed attendees to write their names on a folded piece of cardboard strategically placed in front of them that included a reverse side for which the three Service NSW values: *Teamwork*, *Passion* and *Accountability* were printed with a description of each value written in the Service NSW corporate colours, red, white and blue.

After the introductions, a type of ‘speed dating’ activity was organised and participants were given cards with questions to be addressed during rotations. Questions were mostly of a hypothetical nature such as, ‘What would you do with a million dollars?’ In one exchange a middle-age woman answered by saying:

I know I’m different. I am very different to my siblings who are less empathetic than me and care less about other people. I would give half of the million dollars to my best friend who is unfortunately one of the women over the age of 55, divorced and is living from rent to rent. She is under so much stress, she can’t relax, she has no money (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: I).

Every ‘Living the Service NSW DNA’ training session includes a senior leader sharing their story and explaining why they love working at Service NSW. In addition, a video is played of the CEO in which admiration is expressed for Service NSW, its culture and its people (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: C). As mentioned in Chapter Five, prior to the establishment of the Department of Customer Service and the Shared Corporate Services model, the organisation had hired an Executive Director for People and Culture who was responsible for ‘maintaining’ and ‘building’ upon the culture of Service NSW (Interview with Peter on 2nd July, 2020). Before Jane’s departure, she regularly attended the Service NSW DNA induction program and shared her story.

Jane came to work for Service NSW after her husband passed away from cancer. 'He took care of everything, the rego, the bills.' When he passed, Jane received letters concerning the renewal of her car registration which were under her husband's name. Eventually, Jane tried to process the registration renewal online, but was confronted with 'error messages' after each attempt. Finally, Jane received a final notice to renew her car registration or the registration would be 'cancelled.' This led Jane to visit her local Service Centre in Miranda, NSW. According to Jane, the Customer Service Representative who served her remained warm and calm despite the fact that the Service Centre was very busy with many customers:

Unfortunately, you were not able to complete your transaction online because it is a deceased estate. We actually have to transfer the car into your name and then we can renew the registration, which is something you can't do online because we need a will or some kind of proof of death to process your registration. Don't worry, I'm here with you and I'll sit here with you through everything (Interview with Jane on 10th September, 2020).

Jane felt she was receiving subtle signs from her dead husband. These subtle signs commenced with Jane receiving messages and emails from past colleagues suggesting Jane consider applying for a very specific position at Service NSW, notably, for the position of Executive Director for People and Culture. Contemplating the synchronicity of the events, 'oh, that's the company I handed the registration over to,' Jane began to look into the DNA and it 'really resonated' with her (Interview with Jane on 10th September, 2020). Without updating her CV, Jane applied and got the job. Jane explained:

I told that story at every induction ... Many would say ‘I was in a DNA session and you told a story about when your husband passed and how broken you were and you went into the Service Centre. When somebody comes in, I think about your story.’ My story, it resonates with people (Interview with Jane on 10th September, 2020).

Such personal stories presented during the Living the Service NSW DNA training sessions have been described as highly emotive experiences for new starters and illustrate how presentation rituals (Kunda, 2009) of this sort invite employees to bind their emotions and commitment to the organisation. Indeed, personal success stories shared by guest speakers link their affective experiences to serving customer needs. As one Director commented, ‘If they had their way, I’d be in DNA sessions every day ... My story really talks to people on the Frontline. You can do anything if you are willing to do the hard yards and take on board feedback. You can do anything if you put your mind to it’ (Interview with Natalia on 9th October, 2020).

In addition, guest speakers encourage new employees to speak about why they joined Service NSW and what they expect to learn. In some instances, participants are challenged to rethink their responses to ensure they understand why the customer comes first. Answering challenging questions adequately on the part of new employees seems to be one mechanism used to inculcate the organisation’s norms and values. As an Executive Director explained, ‘You have new people who come in that need to learn what it is all about. Most work out themselves whether they are aligned to the DNA or not. If not, they leave shortly afterwards’ (Interview with Anastasia on 19th October, 2020).

During the session, a presentation concerning ‘The Service NSW DNA Code of Conduct’ outlines how employees should present *Front Stage Self Display for Others* in the course of their

work, how to exercise their personal empowerment and to act with sound judgement using the highest ethical principles. Breaches of the Code of Conduct are also explained. The prescriptive nature of the Code is evident in the terms contained in it:

Our DNA

The Code of Conduct supports the Service NSW DNA and is a cornerstone of our organisation. It is designed to help you understand expectations and your obligations for your behaviour at Service NSW. It will guide you in dealing with any ethical questions you may meet while delivering quality customer service. Our reputation at Service NSW depends on all of the decisions we make each day ... (Service NSW, Code of Conduct).

In the performance of your duties, you are required to ensure that our customers are always your highest priority and that the delivery of an exceptional customer experience is fundamental to all aspects of your work within Service NSW ... (Service NSW, Code of Conduct).

Managers have a responsibility to role model the Code of Conduct and ensure Service NSW employees are aware of the Code of Conduct, as well as the policies and procedures that apply to their roles. Managers also have a responsibility for ensuring that appropriate development and training is provided to allow employees to perform their duties ... (Service NSW, Code of Conduct).

Unauthorised public comment or release of information may compromise or adversely affect our reputation and undermine public confidence in Service NSW. Any inquiries from the media or others that may result in Service NSW making a public comment should be directed to the Service NSW spokesperson. You will treat all information as confidential and will not release any information to the public without the proper authorisation ... (Service NSW, Code of Conduct).

We encourage people to comment and or share official Service NSW media or social media but remember that any comments made can reflect on Service NSW. You must ensure that any sharing of comments protects our professional reputation and maintains customer and employee privacy. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, blogs, video/photo sharing sites, online forums and discussion groups. Employees should be mindful that laws relating to employment continue to apply outside the workplace and that any comments made on a social networking site that refers to Service NSW, a customer or colleague or any work related activities that are not already in the public domain may be in breach of Service NSW policy or legislation ... (Service NSW, Code of Conduct).

Breaches in the Code of Conduct

By accepting employment with Service NSW, you have agreed to abide by this Code of Conduct. If you fail to comply with this Code of Conduct or any other lawful directive, you will be required to explain your actions. If your conduct is contrary to the requirements of the Code of Conduct and does not involve an honest mistake, a range of management options or remedies will be investigated. This may result in action being taken against you including dismissal from Service NSW ... (Service NSW, Code of Conduct).

The Service NSW Code of Conduct is used to enforce adherence to the organisation's formal rules and norms (Van Maanen, 1976). Employees are presented with a prescription for behaviour which ensures that Service NSW customers are always given the highest priority by employees in a way that equally ensures the protection of the Service NSW reputation as a government agency committed to customer service. Other organisational documents issued to new staff members include a 'Jargon Buster' that serves to teach the meanings behind the words spoken in day-to-day business life and to ensure that the Code of Conduct is understood by all staff members (Interview with Samantha on 9^h December, 2020).

In addition, role responsibilities, targets, Customer Performance Indicators (CPIs), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and performance scorecards are discussed at DNA sessions, although metrics of this nature are also addressed in meetings with direct line management. Frontline staff are issued with a Customer Service Representative Scorecard. Each organisational value: *Teamwork*, *Passion* and *Accountability* is associated with several behavioural statements. For instance:

Teamwork:

Contributes to a friendly and collaborative team environment; treats everyone with respect; shares knowledge and skills (Service NSW, Customer Performance Indicator Score Card).

Passion:

Demonstrates a customer centric ethos; shows passion for customer service and goes the extra mile; demonstrates a positive and solutions focused approach; shows genuine care and respect for the customer (Service NSW, Customer Performance Indicator Score Card).

Accountability:

Takes individual responsibility for continual improvement; takes accountability for personal development and integrity; demonstrates a proactive commitment to owning and delivering exceptional customer service (Service NSW, Customer Performance Indicator Score Card).

Each value and behavioural statement is colour coded in the corporate colours along with a pithy statement describing the behavioural benchmarks. Blue is considered the highest behavioural benchmark where a staff member is considered a ‘role model.’ Green, indicates that a staff member ‘demonstrates’ favourable customer outcomes, while Red suggests that a

staff member ‘does not demonstrate’ ideal behaviours and thus performance management is in order. Red is reflected by displaying, or failing to display the following behavioural displays:

Teamwork:

Is unsupportive of their team and fails to contribute to a positive environment; ignores the needs and perspectives of others or is disrespectful; refrains from sharing information and knowledge with others ...

(Service NSW, Customer Performance Indicator Score Card).

Passion:

Fails to see things from the customer’s perspective or responds negatively to customer feedback; delivers inconsistent customer service and neglects opportunities to make customers feel special; says no to a customer without fully exploring possible solutions; shows little regard for the customer’s situation and background ... (Service NSW, Customer Performance Indicator Score Card).

Accountability:

Does not build on suggestions or solutions just accepts the way it is; fails to accept development feedback or take actions to address personal performance issues; fails to be honest about mistakes ... (Service NSW, Customer Performance Indicator Score Card).

From the outset, new Frontline staff members have very clear behavioural benchmark standards for carrying out their day-to-day work as highlighted in the fieldnotes taken during the ‘Living the Service NSW DNA’ training. However, the nature of training changed during the COVID-19 lockdown from face-to-face to a virtual format. As a Training Lead explained:

I get very passionate when I see people's body language and their facial expressions, their engagement ... When you are training through content virtually, you're not

getting those moments ... It's just a blank space ... Are they engaged? ... A lot of time you can't see their facial expressions ... The DNA, I don't know how it's going to work (Interview with Samantha on 9^h December, 2020).

In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Industrial Designers introduced other 'bite sized' compliance training learning modules and competency-based quizzes (Interview with Pamela on 2nd November, 2020). New employees are automatically registered for important compliance training and e-learning modules in the online 'MyLearning' platform to be completed at their discretion. Line Managers could also register new employees into additional compliance and training modules if needed.

'Living the Service NSW DNA' characterises the organisation as one family unit and presents it as a social entity, with a 'unique' mission, with a 'meaningful purpose' where 'the customer comes first' (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: C). *Front Stage Encounters* of this sort invite new staff members to begin an emotive journey triggered by the success stories offered by agents of normative control who demonstrate ideal membership. Next, new staff members, that is, subjects of normative control (Kunda, 2009) carefully choose which personal stories, which vulnerabilities to communicate to others in legitimating themselves in the organisation. Finally, the Code of Conduct reinforces behavioural norms and the potential consequences for non-conformity. On top of this, affirmation of appropriate conformity occurs through formal meetings with agents of normative control. In the following section, data is presented that reflects *Front Stage Encounters* by demonstrating how agents and subjects of normative control affirm cultural alignment with the 'DNA' culture.

Affirming employee membership for cultural alignment was evident in *Front Stage Encounters* during ‘Planning Days’ with the Service Delivery team where both agents and subjects of normative control formally discussed the planning requirements, priorities and activities for the year ahead. All nine members of this particular team within Service Delivery attended along with two additional Training Leads from *Project 1000*. As mentioned, *Project 1000* required hiring additional Frontline staff to manage and support crises, such as the 2020 Australian bushfires and floods.

On this occasion as observed by the researcher, all staff members of the team introduced themselves with carefully constructed work histories and experiences. It soon became evident that some staff members wished to share only fragments of personal information, notably, knowledge that most in the room already knew and offered nothing more. Slowly, Margaret, the Director of the team progressed through her agenda items. As part of the agenda, attendees were informed that the 2020-21 Service Delivery plan aimed to deliver value to support priorities across multiple levels of government in line with the NSW Premier’s Priorities, followed by The Department of Customer Service, Service NSW ‘Big Rocks’ and finally through to Service Delivery.

One significant agenda item focused on how the Department of Customer Service and Service NSW were to proceed together as newly affiliated public sector partner organisations, notably, how the strategies pertinent to each organisation would amalgamate in a product and solution offering for customers. In this regard, the Department of Customer Service claimed its role as a central agency that sets ‘whole of government strategies, standards and drives agency accountability’ by being a ‘network leader’ that delivers cost effective centres of excellence’ through ‘Service Delivery and Reform’ (Interview with Coco on 8^h October, 2020). Its vision

is to be the ‘most customer centric government’ where its customers and communities can ‘expect government services to be trustworthy, effective and easy no matter who they are, where they are or what they need’ with a ‘culture’ that reflects ‘customers and community at the centre, people at the heart, partner collaboration at its best’ (Interview with Fred on 10th March, 2020).

As the meeting progressed, team members were offered opportunities to contribute their ideas, comments and suggestions in line with DCS objectives with both agents and subjects of normative control clearly displaying *Front Stage Authentic Selves*. For instance, one manager explained a recent occurrence where she wasn’t sure if she had acted appropriately in performing her work. After recounting the circumstances of the event in front of the team, she explained that her actions were immediately reassured by the Executive Leaders of the organisation. This demonstrated that presentations of vulnerability are perceived by staff to be ‘authentic’ and ‘one of us’ (See Appendix V:J).

In this regard, *Front Stage Authentic Displays* appear to affirm an employee’s membership in the organisation by way of social inclusion by confirming alignment to the organisation’s ‘DNA’ culture. Through this cultural alignment, employees demonstrate they are emotionally tied and committed to the organisation. However, the degree of such emotional bonds to the organisation cannot be taken as given, because, as Goffman noted, ‘almost anyone can quickly learn a script well enough to give a charitable audience some sense of realness in what is being contrived before them’ (1959: 78). For instance, a Support Office staff member commented on her experiences of being vulnerable at work by saying:

You go through things, but you have either your team or someone in Service NSW supporting you ... they actually genuinely care, not just talk about you behind your back. 'Hey, I can see you are not yourself. That's something you wouldn't normally say ... it's not in your character to say that, is everything OK?' ... They know it's not you from a behavioural standpoint (Interview with Samantha on 9^h December, 2020).

A key feature of the session was the Director's emphasis on change being made in the organisation, such as how it was moving from being 'transactional' to offering 'personalised services.' This shift was captured in a PowerPoint slide show to attendees as follows:

Service NSW commenced with a focus in the transactional services of government. In 2018, we expanded our focus to help customers navigate complex needs and journeys like the cost of living. In the future, we will make it easier for our customers by understanding the full range of their needs and proactively meet them through a targeted and personalised service wherever possible ... We have now expanded our support to include Customer Care – a relationship management service to support customers impacted by droughts, fires, floods and COVID 19 through their journey to recovery ... In 2020, we are building on our customer care model as we become the first point of contact for customers in times of crisis and in helping them move to recovery. We will ultimately move towards offering personalised services across an omni channel network ... (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: J).

We are now a scaled, multi channel business within the customer service cluster with customers and government depending on us. In 2020, we are increasing Service NSW digital capabilities that are exposed via APIs for consumption by other agencies to underpin the Government Made Easy program. We will continue to work with partner agencies to deliver a great customer experience, service and regulatory outcomes and whole of government efficiency. We will deliver our own services when there is

not an obvious government partner. We will focus on continuing to strengthen our risk management ...

(See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: J).

It is important to note that the consultancy, McKinsey was engaged to provide advice on the organisation's operations and was referenced throughout the presentation. In this regard, McKinsey's vision for a Future in 2020 and beyond requires organisations to 'get used to waves of disruption' and to 'get used to a constant battle.' In this scenario, 'Forecasts are out, dashboards are in ... you really need to have a handle on the metrics, the insights to understand what is happening on the ground, to help you be agile enough to adjust and make decisions' and 'companies should double, triple, quadruple their ambition around the scale and pace of their digital transformation.' Finally, 'leadership now requires you to think very differently and plan to do things differently as the future unfolds ... make sure you've got the resilience to be able to lead in a bold, empathetic and ethical way' (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: J).

During the meeting it was made clear that Service NSW was moving from: 'Process Driven to being People Focused'; 'Single to Multi-Disciplinary Capabilities'; Needs-Based Upskilling to Continuous Learning' and; Diversity of Background to Diversity of Thought.' In addition, Service NSW aimed to increase its focus on its short, medium and long-term objectives including 'Digital Literacy' (short term), 'Building a Multi-Disciplinary Workforce' (medium term) and 'Building Capacity through automated compliancy checking' (long term). The organisation's management of such changes was explained to be enacted through four key roles with the Executive Directors taking carriage of the delivery of all service delivery initiatives and progress towards the whole of government strategic agenda. Directors would have end-to-end accountability for the delivery of initiatives in their directorate and performance reporting while Scoping and Delivery Leads would take ownership of scoping and delivering assigned initiatives

and also provide monthly progress updates to ensure that their Directors remained informed. Key actions included scoping delivery of 2020-21 initiatives and metrics and updating the status of initiatives as well as escalating issues and or roadblocks that required resolution through monthly reporting. Finally, Strategy and Performance staff would be expected to govern the reporting framework and advise on planning and design initiatives as well as tracking the status of initiatives and reporting on progress and flagging risks or roadblocks (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: J).

In sum, *Front Stage Encounters* include occasions such as formal interviews, formal trainings and formal meetings. *Front Stage Encounters* vary in size, however, they tend to be either small or medium gatherings. Attendance is mandatory. *Front Stage Encounters* are, therefore, occasions where agents of normative control (Kunda, 2009) are authorised to speak for the organisation and its interest. As outlined in Chapter Three, in such formal and structured ritual gatherings, agents of normative control articulate, illustrate and exemplify what subjects of normative control, in good standing are to think, feel and do (Kunda, 2009). Indeed, ‘outliers’ or those who display behavioural breaches are quickly identified by various agents of normative control through the organisation’s myriad behavioural monitoring and rectification methods. From this perspective, the relationship between agents and subjects of normative control ensures the maintenance of the organisation’s ideal social reality which is routinely enacted during *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*, displays that are in alignment with the organisation’s ideology and its ‘DNA’ culture. Next, how the organisation monitors, reinforces and rectifies *Front Stage Self Displays* as presented by its staff members is now of central concern in terms of *Front Stage Relationships*.

Site of Enactment – Front Stage Relationships

In alignment with the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001), agents of normative control monitor, reinforce and rectify subjects' *Front Stage Self Displays* through a range of normative control efforts for 'DNA' cultural alignment. Indeed, not all *Front Stage Self Displays* are monitored, reinforced and rectified in the same way across the organisation's various membership groups. Firstly, the organisation maintains and reinforces ideal behaviours through a range of reward programs. Frontline teams receive monthly recognition, employee of the month or 'Champ of the Month' awards controlled by the local Customer Service Manager. Rewards of this kind are generally nominal: a box of chocolates, 'a cup of coffee, a cake for morning tea or a gift card' (Interview with Vanessa on 21^s September, 2020). One Refugee Intern recalled receiving an award for helping a fellow Frontline worker as follows:

My manager asked me to come to the stage and tell everyone what I did. I prepared something about the online transaction, how to do it and how to help the customer. I told them everything I knew about the transaction. At the end of the meeting, my manager said here is your gift card with twenty-five dollars ... I felt very proud. I was very, very happy. It was the biggest gift in my life (Interview with Frank on 2nd October, 2020).

The organisation also recognises staff outside of Sydney through the Regional Service Awards. Frontline staff find these awards particularly important for increasing their visibility in the organisation. A Customer Service Manager commented:

Each manager will put a name forward and Sam sends them a personal email to say hey, your manager said X, Y and Z about how great your performance was this week,

which is great because it's coming from my boss to say, oh geez, they actually talk about us ... For people who want to go further, they love that because now my boss knows their name, they get a great kick out of that. At the end of every month, three winners are announced and then Sam gives them a title, the most value player badge ... Then we have the Bravo Awards on a massive scale (Interview with James on 11th September, 2020).

The BRAVO awards: 'Being Recognised as a Valuable member of our Organisation' were launched in 2015 as the organisation's formal employee recognition program where all staff members can nominate either permanent employees or contractors for an award who have been with Service NSW for more than three months. Both individual and team nominations are accepted. Each month, staff members of the Executive Leadership Team announce winners who go into the running for the annual Service NSW CEO awards. The BRAVO award categories include:

Circle of Service (Cos)

- Improved our processes and systems.
- Demonstrated a direct saving (time or money) to our business.
- Made it easier for our customers and employees ... (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: K).

DNA All Star

- Role model all three Service NSW DNA values.
- Have strong team engagement scores.
- Display exceptional customer centric focus.

- Have evidence provided to support all of the above ... (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: K)

People Leader

- Directly manage people/a team.
- Role model all three Service NSW DNA values.
- Have strong team engagement scores.
- Display exceptional customer centric focus.
- Have evidence provided to support all of the above ... (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: K)

Make it Happen

- Clear understanding of the Service NSW strategy, delivering outcomes directly from the plan.
- Consider lessons learned and applies these to future work tasks and projects.
- Demonstrates flexibility and agility in approach by taking responsibility and accountability when delivering outcomes of the strategic plan.
- Consider the impact to Service NSW as an organisation (employees, customers and partner agencies) by working with others to determine solutions.
- Always keeps the big picture in mind how does my role and my work help Service NSW deliver on our commitment to make it easier for customers to do their transactions with the NSW government ... (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: K).

Voice of the Customer

- Customer-centric behaviours in everything they do (listen and respond to the needs of customers; resolve issues).
- Support and/or surprise their internal or external customers.
- Bring the ‘voice of the customer’ to the work they do, by leading the way with others to help them understand the potential impact of their decisions on customer outcomes.
- Behaviours may be supported by customer feedback or CSAT data ... (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: K).

Other formal recognitions include the Service NSW CEO award categories of Fostering Collaboration, Fostering Engagement and Customer Service Commissioner’s award. Through these awards, the organisation deploys several behavioural monitoring and reinforcement mechanisms. A Support Office staff member commented on the significance of these awards:

The BRAVO and Secretary Awards create a lot of buzz, ‘oh this person got the award.’ You can actually have your signature with a personalised sticker beneath it saying that you were the award’s nominee. Like an Oscar nominee has that stuck to the actor’s name for good ... It gets stuck like a title to you ... your signature and everything (Interview with Sam on 28th October, 2020).

In addition, the organisation administers employee engagement surveys on a 6-monthly basis. Employee Satisfaction is measured through two surveys, notably, the People Matters Employee Survey and the Pulse Engagement Employee Survey. According to Service NSW, ‘both surveys aim to inform the development of the Service NSW People Development Strategy’ (Interview

with Anastasia on 19th October, 2020). As mentioned in Chapter Five, The People Matters Employee Survey is a whole of NSW Public Sector survey administered by the NSW Public Service Commission. According to Service NSW, it is continuously recognised as reflecting high employee participation and high levels of employee engagement in comparison with other NSW government agencies in the cluster. To illustrate, Service NSW became the first public sector organisation in Australia to be accredited as a 'Great Place to Work' (Service NSW, 2018; 2019). The Great Place to Work accreditation was based on direct feedback from Service NSW employees through a 'comprehensive audit' of Service NSW's organisational culture. The 'comprehensive audit' is claimed to include employee responses to a 58-statement survey and an evaluation of the organisation's policies and procedures in nine specific areas. It is claimed that 'Great Places to Work' have 'set themselves apart from their competitors' (Service NSW, 2019: 3). Importantly however, the 'Great Place to Work' audit appears to be grossly oversimplified as it does not go as far as to observe employees while they perform their work in order to interpret the subjective experience of employees through prolonged immersion in the field. An analysis of this sort would more adequately present an organisation's social reality as reflected in Chapters Ten and Eleven.

As the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) illustrates through the data below, the impact of reward and recognition programs upon both agents and subjects of normative control is made evident in *Front Stage Relationships*. Here, agents of normative control present *Front Stage Self Displays for Others* that reflect ideal membership, a model for behaviour aligned with the organisation's prescribed culture. *Front Stage Relationships* include occasions such as formal one on one's or other formal small group meetings where there are obvious power differentials between staff members. Attendance is pre-arranged and considered by most to be mandatory.

Such occasions are used to discuss, highlight or exaggerate a staff member's own importance by way of narrative. As one Support Office member commented:

In 12 months, I won the Fostering Engagement and Collaboration Award at the CEO Awards, which was not expected. It was amazing ... It was incredible. I coached for three years and then I got the opportunity to help create a brand-new team ... And one of the ladies now in the team, she just won an award last week (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: D).

In *Front Stage Relationships*, agents of normative control talk about themselves, sometimes others and in relation to the organisation's interests or other pressing interests. However, in *Front Stage Relationships*, agents of normative control share the stage, sometimes reluctantly, but more or less equally with subjects of normative control. For instance, both agents and subjects of normative control listen to each other, ask questions and deliberately engage in dialogue in an effort to maintain or continue to build good will in the relationship. From this perspective, the agent vis-à-vis subject status changes. As illustrated by one manager and direct report in a *Front State Relationship*, 'How should we do it?' ... 'should we invite [the team] into this or just manage it on our own?' ... 'I think we have all the information we need to manage it ourselves, just us really' (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: D).

In *Front Stage Relationships*, high degrees of engagement are observed for both agents vis-à-vis subjects, however, members select their words, deeds and actions very carefully in order to maintain their desired *Front Stage Display*. In *Front Stage Relationships*, subjects of normative control respond thoughtfully to questions and may offer quite serious commentary concerning perspectives of themselves or others or issues relating to the organisation. The atmosphere can

vary from one moment to the next: from friendly, to serious and everything in between and therefore social niceties prevail, however, cognitive and emotional congruence between agents and subjects is typically always on display as one Support Office staff member commented during a *Front Stage Relationship*:

I don't mean to brag, but I think my engagement has increased since being in the team because the culture within our team ... there's so many strong connections. Everybody cares about each other and how they're going, especially because we're working from home ... We're working really hard and delivering for our Frontline and for our teams. (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: D).

In *Front Stage Relationships*, degrees of self-consciousness are high for both agents and subjects of normative control. By contrast, aside from the Code of Conduct, the behavioural rectification mechanisms are less formally transmitted, mainly through one-on-one meetings with managers. A Support Officer Manager explained the process by saying:

They go through face-to-face training; it might be e-learning ... They are trying to find out what the reasons are, why this is happening in the first place. Is it because they are travelling a long distance to get to work? Can we be more flexible and get them closer to a Service Centre? What are the contributing factors to this person behaving the way they are? Do they have another job? Are they not sleeping enough? Is it because they are trying to manage two roles? They look at all the factors and what they can do to improve that particular situation (Interview with Samantha on 9^h December, 2020).

A Regional Manager explained that ‘understanding’ the reasons behind staff members inadequately performing in their role is important because ‘performance management’ can actually be quite hard in the public service, as she explained:

There is a discrepancy inside and outside government for the behaviours ... the risk association is very much lower for terminating employment in government ... The way the rules are set up is that every accusation will be explored. If I call ‘bully,’ the employment law in Australia has slipped completely the other way, the investigation has to legally take place. Whether my claim is true or not, there has to be an investigation (Interview with Chelsea on 4th November, 2020).

Another Manager echoed this view highlighting the importance of looking after employee emotions while managing efforts to change their behaviour to reflect alignment with the organisation’s culture by saying:

Even today, I was talking to HR about dismissing someone and I heard myself say, I shouldn’t be dismissing her before Christmas or with COVID-19 ... Now they do what everyone does who fails in the role - they send them to head office and give them a project rather than address the issue ... It’s about making people feel good, making people feel valued ... It’s not a bad strategy when you think about it ... We put people where we can use them ... Rather than put a dog down, we give the dog another lease on life ... In normal organisations, you have a come to Jesus chat and you are gone. (Interview with Jamie on 21st October, 2020).

Front Stage Relationships are used for reinforcing a staff member's legitimacy in the relationship and for the purposes of maintaining and advancing social standing because staff members seek to be noticed and acknowledged as important and respected by others. In addition, *Front Stage Relationships* may be used to manage potential threats to an employee's membership due to real or perceived ideological and cultural behavioural display breaches as one Regional Manager provided an example of how she exercised normative control by carefully managing the emotions of direct reports and helping them conform to the 'DNA' culture. As she put it:

I build up their self-esteem and help them understand exactly what their skills are, exactly what makes them happy ... If you have those skills as a leader, coupled with really strong documentation skills because we're highly unionised, a low-risk shop so to speak, the person will go looking for something that actually fits their skills and abilities. You can't just turn up and go, I don't like the way you wear your tie; you don't have a job anymore ... If you've got good skills, they'll go, this job isn't working for me and move themselves along (Interview with Barbara on 14th November, 2020).

In *Front Stage Relationships*, display breaches by an agent of normative control carries potential repercussions. For instance, a loss of respect, relevancy and ultimately their level of ideological authority may be in question. If *Front Stage Self Display* breaches are made by subjects of normative control, their membership within the organisation is questioned and or possibly revoked because this breach may be deemed threatening to existing staff members who have internalised the organisation's social reality as part of their self-definition as one Support Office member explained:

The person I was just talking about, she's going to operations ... I don't think she's working that hard now, but I think she's enjoying the break ... Yes, there's a few of them, a couple of them were mine. They were running Service Centres and should never have been running Centres ... They just didn't have right skills, the people element ... (Interview with Jamie on 21^s October, 2020).

Indeed, monitoring *Front Stage Self Displays* of staff members is an ongoing concern for senior leaders. Customer satisfaction rates determine how well the organisation is perceived to be performing and, more importantly, how the organisation is legitimated by its stakeholders as a public sector organisation. Regional Managers and Customer Service Managers are tasked with the responsibility to promote and reinforce adequate *Front Stage Self Displays*. Executive Directors and Directors usually create and or reinstate such efforts. For instance, during COVID-19, there was a fear of burnout on the Frontline since this condition could result in Frontline staff not adequately performing as expected or required and thereby threatening positive customer experiences and endangering the organisation's reputation. As one Director stated:

My greatest concern operating during COVID is that we might lose some of our customer service ... The longer it goes on, that retrains people in their approach ... We are working with People and Culture on reintroducing what we used to have a couple of years ago, what's called a 'Culture Camp.' We really took some time for the team to come together and focus on what does culture mean for this particular team, how they're going to work together so we don't lose that customer service focus (Interview with Elise on 11^h October, 2020).

In fact, it is during times of crisis and periods of burnout that staff members are required to display higher degrees of behavioural compliance to reflect adequate *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*. As one Director stated, 'The work hasn't got any easier. The hours haven't got any shorter, but people's passion keeps growing ... Did you see our engagement score, it was 78 percent in this year's polls, even during the bushfires and the pandemic' (Interview with Elise on 11th October, 2020). One Director explained these monitoring mechanisms as well as the organisation's approach in rectifying behavioural display breaches to ensure staff members are aligned to the 'DNA' culture when performing work by saying:

There's a number of different mechanisms. The Scorecard is a formal performance process where you sit down with your manager and you talk about how you are going. You talk about the behaviours that you're displaying, both good and bad ... We capture real time feedback in Service Centres. That feedback is linked to an agent or a Customer Service Representative or a staff member. If it's all great, then it's great and people get awards for good work. But if it's not, then it's a coaching session around how can we learn from this? What could we do differently and plug in the gaps ... If someone is continuously not hitting that level of customer service, it would go down a formal performance management process (Interview with Vanessa on 21st September, 2020).

One Customer Service Manager outlined the actions she takes to support these behavioural measures by stressing that there are strong consequences for staff whose performance does not meet behavioural display expectations. As she stated:

I fired four people because they weren't meeting my standards ... There are, of course, processes. You go through HR and through your Regional Manager and Director. One

time, it made it to the Executive Team ... There were investigations with one-on-one conversations ... If I am giving you the standards, I'm giving you the expectations and you're not meeting them and I'm giving you support, I'm giving you the training, I'm helping you, that for me is not good enough. I need to do something about it (Interview with Candice on 5^h November, 2020).

Another form of normative control executed is the careful and private management of most, if not all behavioural norm display breaches made by staff. A Senior Manager explained, 'we don't advertise issues ... we address performance when we should' (Interview with Roger on 27^h October, 2020). A Support Office manager echoed this view by saying, 'whatever the issue may be ... it is called out, but not publicly ... it is recognised ... it's having those conversations with your leader and potentially with your leader's Direct Line Manager' (Interview with Chelsea on 4^h November, 2020). Another Support Office staff member commented 'either have a tough conversation with the person or ... performance manage them out' (Interview with Miranda on 5^h November, 2020). As the data illustrates, ideological sources of authority developed several monitoring, reinforcing and rectification mechanisms to enforce behavioural rules and organisational norms. These included real-time customer feedback machines, culture surveys, scorecards, CPI and KPI management metrics and the recently introduced dashboard. In addition, ideal staff members and or teams are rewarded through the organisation's myriad formal recognition programs.

In sum, in *Front Stage Relationships*, agents of normative control use presentation ritual to manage perceived or imagined threats made against them as a result of *Front Stage Self Display* breaches, as a way to maintain, reinforce and protect their membership and their legitimacy within the organisation. If behavioural displays are not considered adequate, a range of rectification

mechanisms are executed, mostly in private by agents of normative control, including performance managing staff 'out.' To begin the formal behavioural rectification process, agents of normative control broadly question display breaches by seeking to 'understand' the underlining issues pertinent to the staff member of interest. If a performance plan is introduced, there is no guarantee the employee will maintain their employment within the organisation. They may, however, be furtively moved to 'projects.' Finally, as mentioned, it is important to reiterate that not all *Front Stage Self Display* discrepancies are the fault of subjects of normative control.

A Direct Challenge to the Service NSW 'DNA' Culture

Due to the establishment of the Department of Customer Service and the Shared Corporate Services model, the strength of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture was directly challenged. The Department of Customer Service was a new overarching organisation whose Executive Leaders introduced an integrationist culture (Martin, 2001) for all cluster agencies. As mentioned in Chapter Five, the NSW Department of Customer Service was established following a machinery of government announcement which led to the merger of numerous roles and responsibilities in order to remove duplication. The Organisation Development (OD) proposed restructure aimed to align the function, roles and responsibilities to the cluster-wide strategic plan to enable functional teams to focus on clear strategic outcomes for the department and its cluster agencies.

The centralisation of the Corporate Services and Corporate Affairs functions within the cluster was in line with the NSW Government Corporate reform agenda that aimed to provide budget savings and efficiency gains. Invariably this involved collaboration with teams to facilitate understanding and integration of business imperatives and strategies in the design and

development of programs and initiatives. In addition, recruitment services were aligned to support business units in a partnership model across the agencies. The new OD function also claimed to have a continued focus on reducing contractors as an integrated component of talent management and a dedicated executive team focused on attraction, appointment and workforce mobility. Further, the RMP proposed placing as many employees as possible within the newly developed Department of Customer Service corporate structure into newly developed roles located in subsidiary agencies which took place during 2019.

As presented next in Chapter Ten, the establishment of the Department of Customer Service and the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model identified emerging subcultures within Service NSW. These subcultures developed as part of an effort to preserve its BAU operations. The emergence of Service NSW's subcultures in opposition to the Department of Customer Service, sought to ensure the preservation of the Service NSW ideology, its mission, vision and its 'DNA' culture across its various membership groups. As a result of this restructure, Service NSW employees engaged in mitigation strategies by identifying loopholes across several occupational and managerial lines that would allow employees to bypass the Department of Customer Service in several matters, specifically in relation to hiring and recruitment and IT. According to participants, challenges in these specific areas drastically slowed Service NSW BAU practices and its ability to adequately serve customers in a timely fashion during some of its most challenging operational periods, notably, during the 2020 bushfire response and the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Service NSW employees experienced high levels of frustration and consequently perceived the Department of Customer Service and its People and Culture team to be inadequately skilled and equipped to handle the support needs required by Service NSW and its staff. Consequently, this merger effectively created subcultures within Service NSW, in large part, due to the DCS's approach in managing

culture across its cluster agencies. In alignment with the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001), these subcultures will be discussed at length in Chapter Ten along with Goffman's (1959) back stage and Van Maanen's (1979) sites of enactment which conceptually combine in terms of *Back Stage Scenes and Back Stage Encounters*.

Conclusion to Chapter Nine

This chapter examined the Service NSW 'DNA' culture from the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001). Drawing on Goffman's (1959) front stage and Van Maanen's (1979) scenes, the first section introduced the concepts of *Front Stage Self Displays* and *Front Stage Self Displays for Others* along with one *Site of Enactment*, the *Front Stage Scene*.

The second section introduced another *Site of Enactment*, the *Front Stage Encounter* to present the data captured during three key presentation rituals, notably, the process of acquiring membership in alignment with the organisation's dominant 'DNA' culture through the formal interview process, the process of enforcing and reinforcing membership for 'DNA' cultural alignment through the organisation's most influential behavioural socialisation program, the 'Living the Service NSW DNA' and affirming membership for 'DNA' cultural alignment through the structure and form of the organisation's formal meetings. In this regard, attention was given to the actions that agents of normative control displayed to invite subjects of normative control to internalise the organisation's ideology and its prescribed culture. Service NSW, therefore, carefully managed its organisational 'DNA' culture through its underlying assumptions, which were built upon the customer centric ideology, values, collaborative team efforts, its recruitment initiatives and its efforts to enact a proactive and continuous learning environment for its employees. The presentation rituals adopted by Service NSW are integral to expectations of staff and how they display themselves in various *Front Stage Self Displays*. Here,

staff make collective efforts to establish and maintain a shared definition of the 'DNA' culture. In short, presentation rituals of this sort are occasions for the exertion of power that defines the organisation's social reality.

The third section introduced another *Site of Enactment*, the *Front Stage Relationship* that provides agents of normative control an opportunity to find out why subjects may breach behavioural norms and expectations and to 'help' staff members adhere to the organisation's ideology and culture through a range of behavioural rectification mechanisms. Finally, this chapter highlighted the direct challenge the Service NSW 'DNA' culture faced as a result of the introduction of the Department of Customer Service and the Shared Corporate Services model. This machinery of government change caused substantial disruption to Service NSW BAU causing several subcultures to emerge. The next chapter discusses the various subcultures from the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001) as identified within Service NSW, including micro cultures that function within broader organisational subcultures. Chapter Ten also discusses the subcultures which emerged in Service NSW as a result of the establishment of the Department of Customer Service and its merger with its cluster agencies.

Chapter Ten

Subcultures within the Service NSW ‘DNA’ Culture

Introduction

The central concern of this chapter is to discuss the various subcultures of the organisation by applying the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001). Through this approach, subcultural differences will be identified. On this basis, the study accounts for dissenting voices that are either intentionally or unintentionally ignored or suppressed by the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture. As various scholars have noted, subcultures can enhance one another and be mutually reinforcing (Van Maanen, 1991), exist in conflict (Barley, 1986) or remain independent (Louis, 1985). In addition, subcultures may be bound by occupational lines, including managerial, professional and or blue-collar employees (Martin, 2001). Subcultures may also ‘proceed along functional or vertical lines, or, on the basis of networks of personal contacts based on work, friendship or demographic identities such as race, ethnicity or gender’ (Martin, 2001: 103). Subcultures may have rigid or blurred boundaries or have reinforced boundaries in an attempt to remain safe and secure (Martin, 2001). Thus, the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001) offers the prospect of recognising subcultural conflict and enables a fuller exploration of the workings of power (Lucas, 1987; Mumby, 1987, 1988; Alvesson, 1996; Clegg & Hardy, 1996; Martin, 2001). By applying the differentiation perspective, this chapter aims to demonstrate that the organisation’s subcultures are far from static and how they waver between being in and out of alignment with the organisation’s ideology and its prescribed ‘DNA’ culture .

In line with Meyerson and Martin’s (1987) characterisation of the differentiation perspective and Martin and Siehl’s (1983) view of subcultures, notably, enhancing, orthogonal and counter subcultures, the first section of this chapter highlights the enhancing subcultures within Service

Centres while the second section illustrates the orthogonal subcultures within Service NSW which were evident along functional and occupational lines within Support Office. Within these subcultures, countless micro cultures existed within broader subcultures which function according to their own rules and values for operating within the organisation. In this respect, micro cultures are typically bound by strong affiliations with members who hold a similar power status within an organisation's subculture. An important point to be made is that the organisation's various orthogonal, counter subcultures and micro cultures were most obviously identified through communication nuances, including breakdowns and the various communication escalation processes that occurred in times of crisis within the organisation.

The third section outlines the organisation's counter subcultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983) that emerged within Service NSW with the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model. In this regard, the launch of the Department of Customer Service (DCS), its new integrationist culture and its cluster-wide strategies are particularly significant as these developments required Service NSW to considerably adjust its standard business operations. Problematically, these changes also required Service NSW to accommodate the DCS's informal values and rules which were incongruent with its own enacted customer centric 'DNA' culture. As will be demonstrated, the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model created a strong operational chasm between the two agencies. Most notably, subcultures were established by managerial and professional hiring managers within Service NSW to effectively deal with significant recruitment issues due to the earlier mentioned operational incongruencies enacted by the DCS. In addition, other significant subcultural differences emerged between the two agencies as a result of the disparities in relation to work pace and productivity expectations. Indeed, the operational chasms between the two agencies were exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The discussion begins by recapping the distinctions made between organisational subcultures from the differentiation perspective (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Martin 2001).

Service NSW ‘DNA’ Subcultures

As outlined in Chapter Three, Martin (2001) proposed three perspectives of cultures in organisations, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation perspectives with each perspective taking an alternative position on cultural manifestations, orientation to consensus and treatment of ambiguity. Of central concern now is the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001), which recognises the existence of subcultures that might coexist with the organisation’s dominant culture. These different subcultures have been depicted as enhancing, orthogonal and countercultural (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). As outlined in Chapter Three, enhancing subcultures exist in an organisational enclave and adheres to the core values of the dominant culture. In an orthogonal subculture, staff members would concurrently accept the core values of the dominant culture but also subscribe to a separate un-conflicting set of values particular to themselves (Martin & Siehl, 1983). By contrast, counter subcultures would present a ‘direct challenge to the core values of a dominant culture and, therefore, should exist in an uneasy symbiosis, taking opposite positions on value issues that are critically important’ (Martin & Siehl, 1983: 53-4). The differentiation perspective (Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Martin, 2001), therefore, highlights the possibility of subcultural conflict. Attention now turns to the organisation’s enhancing subcultures.

Enhancing Subcultures

For the most part, each Service Centre exhibits an enhancing subculture. However, similar to the Support Office, Service Centres also encompass orthogonal and or counter subcultures

depending on communication, escalation issues or ad hoc activities that are occurring within each Service Centre. One example of how the Frontline staff work to enhance the organisation's dominant customer-centric 'DNA' culture is provided by the descriptions of the way that Service Centre staff members take initiative in order to deliver services for their local community. As Bronnie explained:

Whilst as an organisation we might support Steptember or Blue Jeans Day, you'll have local Service Centres saying 'we're going to do this little thing here because we can see that it's needed.' During the bushfires, there were so many children who had lost their backpacks, stationary, all the stuff they needed for school. The Service Centre in that particular area did a whole collection drive for school children who lost everything ... Local Service Centres take initiative and do what needs doing (Interview with Bronnie on 9th November, 2020).

A Customer Service Manager also explained how he cultivates the 'DNA' culture, 'When the door shuts to the lunchroom, it's time to laugh. It's time to have a joke (Interview with James on 11th September, 2020). A Frontline staff member explained his positive experience, feeling part of a 'family' while having to move around various metropolitan Service Centres to conduct his work, 'We were like a family. I feel at home ... Everyone is saying, thank you mate ... When you say these sentences, everyone respects you ... Everyone gets along really well at work ... The team side of it is fantastic' (Interview with Stan on 8th October, 2020). The data above suggests that Service Centres reflect, most broadly, enhancing subcultures. However, as the data reflects in the next section, orthogonal subcultures within Service Centres may emerge though the management and or mismanagement of salient or ad hoc business issues.

Orthogonal Subcultures

As outlined in Chapter Three, this doctoral research adopts the interpretivist and radical humanist research paradigms (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) which focus on identifying by way of interpretation of the data, the importance that both meaning and power have upon its organisational members through subcultural differentiation (Martin, 2001). Both meaning and power relations were identified through an analysis of the membership groups of the various organisational divisions and units which demonstrated adherence to the Service NSW 'DNA' values as well as other un-conflicting values. In order to present the subcultural data captured through the field work, this thesis amalgamates Goffman's (1959) back stage with Van Maanen's (1979) encounters and now introduces another *Site of Enactment – Back Stage Encounters*.

Site of Enactment – Back Stage Encounters

Back Stage Encounters involve both agents and subjects of normative control who are staff members associated with particular organisational subcultures that are based on similar occupational, managerial or professional groups and who work towards common organisational ends. In *Back Stage Encounters*, agents and subjects of normative control display selves that tend to model behaviour aligned with the organisation's prescribed culture. Nevertheless, they express discontent when their views or actions are suppressed by outside influences in delivering for the organisation's ends in alignment with their roles, tasks and KPIs. In this respect, both agents and subjects of normative control can demonstrate un-conflicting values in relation to the dominant culture. In interviews with Frontline staff, members provided evidence of the existence of orthogonal subcultures within Service Centres depending on the management of salient or ad hoc business requirements as demonstrated by these un-conflicting values. As one Frontline staff member commented:

There are silos between metropolitan and regional ... We do things differently. A lot of it is around not understanding other parts and the pace of the business ... When you're concentrating on your customer and your Change Management piece all the time, you tend to lose track of what everyone else is doing and stick to your own (Interview with Miranda on 5^h November, 2020).

The following account from a Frontline staff member depicts the orthogonal subculture that existed in a Service Centre which practised un-conflicting values while the managers still enacted the 'DNA' culture by saying:

My colleague is tenured, she had been in the organisation for about five years. She was asked to serve another agency's transaction where she had no expertise ... She read all the instructions ... She served the customer for 30 minutes. She said, 'I just can't do this. I don't have help.' It was escalated. The coordinators took that escalation ... There was no training for this (Interview with Leo on 2nd November, 2020).

As the data illustrates, Service Centres, at any one time can enact enhancing and orthogonal subcultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983). Also evident through the data above, in *Back Stage Encounters*, staff members present a *Back Stage Self Display* by communicating in ways that appear less self-conscious in relation to their thoughts and viewpoints concerning activities involving them and their work. *Back Stage Encounters* can also be characterised by numerous micro cultures that act within broader organisational orthogonal subcultures which function across departments or business units. In this regard, micro cultures are bound by their own discreet rules and values. In micro cultures, agents and subjects of normative control with similar power status came together in *Back Stage Encounters* in an effort to support one another in achieving their

organisational and professional ends. To illustrate, in Support Office, staff members with greater capacity for normative control appear to stick together. Three interviewees from Service Delivery, that is, within the orthogonal subculture of Support Office explained how their team's culture was different to the rest of the organisation, suggesting a discreet micro culture within the broader orthogonal culture of Support Office:

Social Impact and Frontline Engagement do culture better than others ... It is quite a special team in that we invest a lot of time into each of our staff to make sure that everyone feels supported and valued (Interview with Patricia on 8^h September, 2020).

I'm not afraid to make decisions because I know that whether I make the right decision or the wrong decision, I have a manager and a director that will back me up. Even if I stuff up, I can go to my manager and ask how do I fix this and what should I do (Interview with Evangeline on 15^h September, 2020).

Other teams in Service Delivery, it's not the same with those people (Interview with Shirley on 28^h September, 2020).

Another participant gave an example of how her team 'stuck together' suggesting a micro culture emerged within the broader orthogonal subculture of Support Office, 'When my team and I moved in from People and Culture to Service Delivery, we were not welcome ... Our behaviour had to change ... It took me six months to fit in ... The hard part was, there were no seats ... We ended up sitting on our own. But we stuck together' (Interview with Pamela on 2nd November, 2020). In relation to Service Delivery's orthogonal subculture, a staff member explained, 'There is definitely a disconnect in our Support Office. I think if you ask a lot of staff

there is not a DNA culture in Support Office. Maybe culture in a team' (Interview with Pamela on 2nd November, 2020). The Support Office encompassed a range of different departments and teams which created a mixture of micro cultures within its broader orthogonal subcultures that shifted depending on normative control (Kunda, 2009) dynamics which were typically bound by roles and activities required for organisational ends. In this regard, staff members within Support Office appeared to have greater control and power to minimise sanctions against their members by creating ambiguity through their approach to work related tasks and responsibilities, a phenomenon that also reflects the fragmentation perspective in relation to the Service NSW 'DNA' culture (Martin, 2001) which is discussed further in the next chapter.

Nonetheless, while some Support Office staff members internalised the 'DNA' culture, they were not the primary recipients of the organisation's ideology and, therefore, they did not consistently enact the organisation's prescribed 'DNA' culture and its values which promulgated both persistent and emerging orthogonal subcultures with un-conflicting values. In this regard, in the Support Office, flexibility and autonomy are self-directed and supported by an opaque organisational structure which provide greater opportunities for concealing activities or lack thereof. Finally, as evident through the data above, in *Back Stage Encounters*, staff members present a *Back Stage Self Displays* by communicating in ways that seem to be less self-conscious in relation to their thoughts and viewpoints concerning activities involving them and other professional affiliations within the workplace pertaining to their membership group as well as subgroups which sit outside from it. For instance, several staff members from Service NSW suggested that the 'culture' of Transport NSW was 'terrible' by saying:

Transport are very Noisy. The service they provide is absolutely terrible to us (Interview with Candice on 5^h November, 2020). On occasion, I've said I've worked for RMS, 'I

can tell you my old RMS number, will this change your attitude to the way you're speaking to me? You never asked me for the last 15 years I've worked for you guys.' I can tell you now there's negativity coming from that side to the staff here and it is quite noticeable. My staff at times cry (Interview with James on 11th September, 2020).

In *Back Stage Encounters*, agents and subjects of normative control, therefore, create mitigation strategies for organisational ends in alignment with their roles, tasks and KPIs in relation to members of other subgroups who operate incongruently to the organisation's culture. As such, in *Back Stage Encounters*, both agents and subjects of normative control express discontent when their views or actions are suppressed by outside influences in opposition to the dominant or prescribed culture. In *Back Stage Encounters*, agents and subjects of normative control utilise this encounter as an opportunity to engage and build goodwill by coming together against a common or pending threat to business operations. The atmosphere is largely serious however, irony or cynicism against outside staff members feature in dialogue which appears to induce cognitive and emotional congruence between staff members. As illustrated by two managers who expressed, 'There is always a problem with Transport, whether it is driver testing or our Frontline service (Interview with Pamela on 2nd November, 2020). 'They have made around x amount of errors this month. Somehow, we work together and manage them' (Interview with Miranda on 5th November, 2020). *Back Stage Encounters* include occasions such as informal meetings and informal gatherings along professional, occupational and or managerial lines. Encounters of this sort vary in size, however, they tend to be either small or medium gatherings. Attendance is considered by most to be mandatory. Attention now turns to the organisation's counter subcultures.

Counter Subcultures

In line with the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001), Support Office staff members clearly recognise the differences between them and the Frontline. Several Support Office staff members commented, 'We don't live and breathe the DNA, that really strong culture like there is on the Frontline. The Frontline, it's a cult. They've drunk some Kool-Aid. They're on board with the culture and living and breathing the DNA. Support Office stick to their own' (Interviews with: Evangeline on 15^h September, 2020; Polly on 11^h September, 2020; and Pamela on 2nd November, 2020). Indeed, other criticisms felt by support office staff were made explicit in relation to the DNA culture. As one participant commented on Service NSW's customer satisfaction scores by saying:

You've got a 98 percent customer rating satisfaction ... That is not true at all, but you can't say what's wrong with that number because it's 98%. Always has been. Always will be ... You got some guy pissed off, you're not going to ask him for feedback. If you want a 98 percent scorecard, you can't undo that now, it's the myth that has been created ... It is an absolute measurement of every executive in this organisation ... (Interview with Roger on 27^h October, 2020).

The data above exemplifies the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001). Support Office has wavering counter subcultures across a range of different departments and teams. Some counter subcultures, as the data illustrates, do not reflect alignment to the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. Rather, these counter subcultures reveal an uneasy symbiosis which takes opposing positions on various organisational issues (Martin & Siehl, 1983). As mentioned, this thesis proposes that organisational subcultures can be observed and analysed from a micro cultural perspective. In this regard, micro cultures are bound by their own discreet rules and values and can be

observed as emergent or persistent, reflecting a culture within an established subculture for staff members of the same team and or department as well as various activities occurring in relation to the occupational demands placed upon staff members in performing their work. Because staff members move between projects and various activities, micro cultures can be difficult to identify as their boundaries are often deliberately blurred, yet staff members who subscribe to the idiosyncratic values and rules within micro cultures tend to be very strong in relation to their membership affiliation even as they navigate across the various organisational divisions to carry out their work. Specifically, the fieldnotes of Support Office document staff moving from meeting to meeting and event to event which identified the existence of micro cultures depending on tasks at hand and roles and activities that were being undertaken by different departments and or teams as well as staff members within teams during particular times and events. These micro cultures appeared to form among those with similar power status in relation to their occupational standing and those who had close affiliations with each other. A staff member of the same team offered data to suggest a micro culture existed within the broader counter subculture of Support Office:

Conflicts within our team happen all the time ... It's not exactly a conflict as in by choice, but it is just due to the nature of the tasks, projects or the nature of the timelines where they sometimes clash ... Projects are on hold, it affects the timelines and then the agencies affected and the budget is affected and no one is happy about it ... Sometimes in Support Office, it's a regular freeze on systems they put and there is so much of a backlog and then you're like, oh my God, it's my turn ... My team and I work towards the same thing, but different departments, teams and members have different communication needs and that can be difficult depending on the priorities at the time (Interview with Charlotte on 2nd November, 2020).

In this regard, communication within Support Office can be ‘clunky’ and at times tends to be either deliberately, or sometimes, unintentionally ‘fractured’ (Interview with Candice on 5^h November, 2020). A Support Office staff member explained these communication fractures and why deliberate attempts were made by Support Office staff members to protect information leaks to the Frontline by saying:

There's definitely intentional stuff that gets held very close to the chest because in the political landscape, the person who makes the announcement is the person who gets the accolades ... Some departments are filled with lower grade employees like the Frontline who won't understand it ... Just tell them what they need to know rather than the whole truth (Interview with Barbara on 14^h November, 2020).

Relatedly, three participants within Support Office explained counter subcultural dynamics within the organisation by saying:

Communication between teams and departments in Support Office may be fluffy versus than the rest of the organisation. There is a lot of resentment in Service Centres about people that work in Support Office (Interviews with Timothy on 1^s October, 2020). There's a lack of communication about what Support Office is working on and what they're doing. There's also a lack of communication coming from the Service Centres back to support office in terms of feedback on what works and what doesn't work and what they need (Interview with Miranda on 5^h November, 2020). Projects just get rolled out from Support Office to Service Centres ... ‘this is what you're doing.’ Then Service Centres go, ‘hang on, that's not going to work’ (Interview with Bronnie on 9^h November, 2020).

Next, the establishment of the Department of Customer Service and the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model is discussed in relation to its management of culture and how counter subcultures emerged within Service NSW.

Emerging Counter Subcultures in Service NSW due to the Establishment of the Department of Customer Service and the Introduction of the Shared Corporate Services Model

To discuss the dimensions of the various Service NSW counter subcultures which emerged due to the introduction of the Department of Customer Service, first, it is important to highlight the steps the Department's People and Culture team took to instil its integrationist culture (Martin, 2001) and its strategic plans across its cluster agencies. As mentioned in Chapter Nine, the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service introduced a three-pillar strategy, 'Customer and Community at the Centre, People and Inclusion at the Heart, Partner Collaboration at its Best.' On 8^h April 2020, the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service introduced the Department's new approach to culture to its cluster agency executives (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: M). In 2020, two years after its establishment, the Department of Customer Service introduced a number of additional strategies aimed to strengthen the Department's culture which were to be implemented across its cluster agencies, notably, the Connect and People Strategies. A staff member of the DCS explained how these strategies could work across the cluster agencies by saying:

The Secretary acknowledges that we have brands within brands ... She is of the view that all those can co-exist because we're all here to provide customer service ... Our People Strategy, it is our intent ... Customers and Communities are at the centre, that is how we serve. People and Inclusion is at the heart, it's how we work and Partner

Collaboration at its best, is how we learn, lead and grow ... If you keep the story in really simple terms it resonates with everyone ... We're building out those three pillars ... into our performance and reward and recognition systems (Interview with Thomas on 30^h September, 2020).

This notion of 'inclusion and belonging' is of central importance to the Department of Customer Service and its promotion of a new overarching integrationist culture across its cluster agencies. A staff member of the People and Culture team within the DCS explained the desire as well as the difficulties experienced by the Department when driving a 'culture of inclusion and belonging' by saying:

We talk about one team, one vision, everyone working to the same plan ... but it's quite difficult because every department head or agency says, that's great but I want to do something very unique over here ... It can become quite complicated to get buy-in ... To tell that narrative so that it resonates is a real challenge for People and Culture and also for the cluster coms and engagement team (Interview with Thomas on 30^h September, 2020).

As a way to mitigate against potential backlash and divergent strategy development and in an attempt to drive cultural consensus in alignment with their mission and values, the Department of Customer Service tried to find commonality between all cluster agencies by encouraging the expression of common pain points through its 'inclusion strategy.' A Director at the DCS explained, 'We're running a series of workshops to talk about the feedback that we've received from our leaders through our inclusive leadership interviews' (Interview with Thomas on 30^h September, 2020). Accordingly, the DCS sought to interview '40 to 50 employees across the

cluster to hone in and do an analysis' (Interview with Thomas on 30^h September, 2020). As a result, there was acknowledgement from the DCS that Service NSW staff thought they were 'unique' as well as recognition that they were 'sharing the same pain from a cluster wide lens.' Thomas pointed out, 'What we haven't done well is bring all of the different areas of our cluster together nicely ... We've bred ... an "us" and "them" culture' (Interview with Thomas on 30^h September, 2020). Thomas also stated, 'the Department looks at Service NSW with envy, but also with disdain, because they get all this emphasis from the Minister. The Minister always talks about Service NSW, not the DCS' (Interview with Thomas on 30^h September, 2020). It was made clear by participants that the Department of Customer Service simply cannot cater for the needs of all agencies and their staff members. Finally, Thomas conveyed, 'One of the challenges of working on organisation wide strategies like "culture" is that you can't reach out to every single employee to get their feedback. You can't please everyone' (Interview with Thomas on 30^h September, 2020). Another staff member of the DCS commented on her perspectives concerning the business issues that transpired within Service NSW when the Shared Corporate Services model was introduced, by saying, 'I think Service Centres will probably feel they don't have the same support as they used ... But, that's life ... Businesses change, grow, budgets get tough. I don't think you can change that' (Interview with Coco on 8^h October, 2020). The attention now turns to discussing the emerging subcultures within Service NSW following the introduction of the Department of Customer Service and the establishment of the Shared Corporate Services model by combining Goffman's (1969) back stage concept and Van Maanen's (1979) scene to introduce another *Site of Enactment Back Stage Scenes*.

Site of Enactment – Back Stage Scenes

Back Stage Scenes involve agents and subjects of normative control who are bound by organisational subcultures and can be further bound by micro cultures within them. In *Back Stage Scenes*, agents and subjects of normative control display selves that may be either in alignment or contrary (or flux between) the organisation's ideology and its dominant culture. In other words, agents and subjects of normative control display selves that flux between ideal membership and in between or against the organisation's prescribed culture, in large part, in response to an external power source that enacts opposing informal values and rules. To illustrate, Service NSW employees developed mitigation strategies to avoid dealing with the Department of Customer Service, specifically its People and Culture team, in order to deliver both Service NSW team and individual KPIs (Interviews with: Nicole on 15^h March, 2020; Stephanie on 20^h March, 2020; Evangeline on 15^h September, 2020; Shirley on 28^h September, 2020; Pamela on 2nd November, 2020; and Suzie on 3^d November, 2020) (See Appendix VI, Fieldnotes: D). Service NSW staff conveyed the view that before the establishment of the Department of Customer Service, their departments and teams worked more cohesively in delivering results for its customers because its values were not in conflict. This changed when the DCS was established. As two interviewees of Service NSW commented:

We had this one team mentality. Everyone understood what it was like to be on the phone or to be on their feet all day in front of customers ... We had control of our own destiny (Interview with Pamela on 2nd November, 2020) ... Since moving to Department of Customer Service, we have lost our culture ... They don't have the same values as us. It might be written on paper, but they don't live and breathe the same values as we do (Interview with Chelsea on 4^h November, 2020).

Relatedly, two Service NSW staff members commented:

There's a lot of politics. When you think about government, you think about the Department of Customer Service – it's slow and hard to deal with, the list goes on. I really think that losing our strong leadership team from People and Culture to the Department of Customer Service was a big loss for Service NSW (Interview with Steve on 10^h March, 2020). It's not a sustainable model ... Our business is unique from the rest of the cluster ... Yet we're all bundled up into one group ... This is deteriorating our culture (Interview with Maryanne on 23^d March, 2020).

Despite the Department of Customer Service Secretary's aim of cultivating an overarching customer centric culture across its cluster agencies, several interviewees indicated that the previous Service NSW focus on the customer had declined since the establishment of the DCS. Indeed, this result was exemplified by an executive who offered further detail concerning issues of the merger and the impact on Service NSW's customer centric, fast paced business operations by saying:

The speed of decision making is now much slower ... The political layers of Ministers deciding something in the morning and they have to implement it by three o'clock in the afternoon. The amount of pressure ... from a political perspective is absolutely enormous (Interview with Fiona on 24^h September, 2020).

Another staff member commented on the Department of Customer Service and the problems this agency caused Service NSW in delivering for the customer. As two staff members within Service NSW explained:

They don't necessarily put the customer first and they make it difficult for us to do that customer piece (Interview with Miranda on 5^h November, 2020). The agencies see the world as you don't put the compliance piece first and, therefore, you make it difficult for us (Interview with Alistair on 3^d November, 2020).

The conflicting informal values and norms between the two agencies appeared to cause severe discomfort between some employees. Three staff members explained, 'You don't feel comfortable in talking about Service NSW success in the cluster in the same ways that you do internally because you feel they are thinking "I'd like to cut you down"' (Interview with Maryanne on 23^d March, 2020). 'It's the tall poppy syndrome' (Interview with Barbara on 14^h November, 2020). 'Let's bring you down a peg or two' (Interviews with Steve on 10^h March, 2020). Several staff members echoed the above sentiment about the negative impact the introduction of the Department of Customer Service had on the customer centric ethos in Service NSW. A Director explained the phenomenon by saying:

We're starting to see old habits and old behavioural patterns back to RTA, RMS days. We're starting to see things like, 'oh, that's not my job, that sits with someone else'... It's becoming a beige organisation ... Whilst I understand you've got this org structure, it's impacting people on a personal level now ... That's what damages culture really quickly ... I've topped out (Interview with Elise on 11^h October, 2020).

The 'us' versus 'them' mentality appears to be very salient. Commenting on an occasion, staff members of the two agencies were designing a presentation for a conjoint meeting, one manager explained, 'the DCS stripped our presentation back ... I don't feel they quite understand it ... We're 50 percent of the cluster. If you're not listening to us, you're off in the

wrong direction' (Interview with Josephine on 17^h September, 2020). A distinction between staff members of the two agencies was made clear by a Service NSW employee who commented, 'I went to the DCS awards ... Service NSW people ... we were all bubbly ... It just wasn't the same. If you asked, are we one big cliquey group that shares the same DNA. I would absolutely say, no. We don't' (Interview with Audrey on 10^h September, 2020).

As evident by way of the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001), both agencies may *espouse* similar formal values, however, each agency *enacts* different values causing subcultural divisions between the two agencies and their employees. Service NSW staff members, therefore, aimed to preserve their espoused and enacted values to support BAU activities, to avoid, where possible BAU delays or disruptions made by the DCS. Preservation of Service NSW BAU also came with dialogue reflecting the different membership status in relation to Service NSW staff versus employees from the DCS. In this regard, it was made evident that in *Back Stage Scenes*, agents and subjects of normative control may communicate in language that suggests indifference, cynicism or shared irony. Such commentary often comes at the expense of other staff members who are not part of *Back Stage Scenes*, as illustrated by participants who expressed their perceptions of the People and Culture team within the Department of Customer Service. One Senior Member within Service Delivery commented:

Those people can talk really well, but produce nothing. I don't think they understand Service NSW culture ... When the Service NSW People and Culture team were tasked with the responsibility to do the 6-month cultural transition work when the DCS was established, the DCS People and Culture team were sitting at the back of the room and playing with their phones and not really engaging with the content. None of them introduced themselves to anyone (Interview with Carla on 26^h February, 2020).

One Support Office staff member explained that even some of her close associates who transitioned to working for the Department of Customer Service from Service NSW were distressed because they no longer deliver results for Service NSW. As she put it:

Simona and Charlie said to me, ‘we’ve been here for 12 months and we have not delivered a single thing ... everything takes so long to get off the ground. It’s politics. It’s approvals ... it’s so disengaging when you’re working for an organisation and in 12 months you haven’t done a single output, it’s super frustrating’ (Interview with Pamela on 2nd November, 2020).

In *Back Stage Scenes*, agents and subjects of normative control also flux in degrees of self-consciousness. This oscillating *Back Stage Self Display* is largely due to the fact that organisational affiliations and or career aspirations of agents and subjects of normative control may not be entirely known, or deliberately held in confidence, as one participant in Support Office commented, ‘how do you know who you can talk to freely? I mean, I trust my team and I have open discussions with them, but with the DCS things change from one day to the next. It’s hard to know what is going on behind the scenes sometimes’ (Interview with Chelsea on 4th November, 2020). Attention now turns to another Service NSW counter subculture which emerged following the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model due to conflicting rules (Van Maanen, 1976) between the two agencies.

As mentioned, prior to the establishment of the Department of Customer Service, hiring and recruitment was conducted by the People and Culture division within Service NSW. A manager explained the hiring process on the Frontline by saying:

In a Service Centre environment, you have hundreds of people walking through the door ... It takes three to four months before you can let someone loose on the counter and know that they're not going to make mistakes ... The whole process can take 6 months to replace one person ... Mangers could utilise the recruitment tools to take a risk on someone that didn't have the work experience but presented with the right attitude and behaviour that aligns with our culture ... that doesn't happen anymore (Interview with Debra on 9^h November, 2020).

Another Support Office staff member commented:

The DCS has thrown our processes out of whack ... If there was somebody who potentially needed to be performance managed out, we would go to our People and Culture team and we would have a support person who represents us and helps us take the steps on what we need to do ... at the moment we don't have any of that (Interview with Miranda on 5^h November, 2020).

In line with the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001), as evident by the data, the DCS and Service NSW have different rules for hiring and recruitment. The changes experienced within Service NSW as a result of DCS hiring and recruitment protocols demonstrated the emergence of a counter subculture with Service NSW. To illustrate, a hiring manager explained, 'at the DCS, the time has extended to three months for a recruiter to even pick up your paperwork' (Interview with Roger on 27^h October, 2020). Other staff members explained, 'Support functions aren't meeting them where we need them to be ... We need to have systems and processes in corporate services that match our pace' (Interviews with Cathy on 11^h October, 2020 and Jamie on 21^s October, 2020). Another senior manager commented, 'Right now,

there is conflict between People and Culture and the Regional Managers and Service Centre Managers as a whole ... we operate in individual silos' (Inness on 16^h November, 2020). A hiring manager offered another example in relation to the Department of Customer Service and the hiring and onboarding rule disparities by saying:

Their systems don't work ... I have attended presentations for 40 minutes about this wonderful recruitment strategy, but how does that fix people not getting back to you ... the fundamentals? At the DCS, there are no service level commitments. There's no one saying, why haven't you got back to that person? There is no accountability. It's free flow, free range ... Other managers are experiencing the same thing ... If I did what recruitment did in the DCS, I wouldn't have a job (Interview with Roger on 27^h October, 2020).

Another hiring manager commented:

I really don't know how it's so broken ... I had the same conversation with someone in the DCS who joined six weeks ago. Well, she promised me the earth. I said, look, I understand your promises. You're assuring me that you won't let me down. You'll do this? She said 'yes' straight to my face. Three weeks later, she's not returning phone calls. She's not turning up to weekly meetings ... Everything was working fine before the cluster and then it fell over (Interview with Jamie on 21^s October, 2020).

In line with the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001), another rule discrepancy between both agencies is reflected by one staff member who commented, 'the way that the Government Recruitment Act is written, there's an ability to do a bit of a tap on the shoulder' (Interview

with Barbara on 14th November, 2020). This hiring and recruitment legislative loophole gave Service NSW an ability to preserve its customer centric focus by hiring people on demand without the need to navigate the bureaucracies of the DCS. A hiring manager explained ‘shortcuts’:

Now I look for shortcuts so I don’t need to go through DCS recruitment ... I am tapping people on the shoulder for opportunities because the DCS takes too long ... That has a negative impact on our culture ... It is not open, transparent and honest (Interview with Pamela on 2nd November, 2020).

Support Office staff members explained that while they need to create mitigation strategies in order to alleviate BAU impacts due to the establishment of the Shared Corporate Services model, these efforts came at a cost to their professional reputations, as two Support Office staff members explained:

I should be rolling out mental health and suicide awareness training but I can’t wait for 12 months with the cluster, the DCS, with no action ... People need it now. They’re going through COVID, bushfires and the floods ... By the time we get our stuff from the DCS, it takes too long. We just do it ourselves ... We keep things in our own hands (Interview with Steve on 10th March, 2020). You ask, you wait and at the eleventh hour they say, ‘oh you’re not going to do that?’ ... It’s just that faceless bureaucracy (Interview with Inness on 16th November, 2020).

Evidently, a counter subculture emerged across hiring managers within Service NSW in an effort to circumnavigate the slow paced, rule bound bureaucracies of the DCS as a result of the

establishment of the Shared Corporate Services model in order to deliver for the customer. Evidently, *Back Stage Scenes* include occasions where staff members who form part of subcultures congregate to discuss salient issues in team meetings or other work-related gatherings in order to carry out various tasks and activities to progress organisational ends. Attendance is pre-arranged and considered by most to be mandatory.

Yet another counter subculture (Martin & Siehl, 1983) emerged in Service NSW due to the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model. This counter subculture demonstrated both the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001) in *Back Stage Scenes* through incongruent values. In this regard, a counter culture emerged across senior and middle line managers as evident through informal meetings held across managerial and professional affiliations in the organisation in relation to issues with Information Technology (IT). IT escalations were a regular occurrence because Service NSW staff were unable to effectively deliver upon tasks and responsibilities in relation to serving customers without having to escalate matters to both managers within Service NSW and the DCS. A Senior Manager introduced the IT issues in Service NSW as a result of the DCS merger by saying:

Technology escalations ... It has gotten slowly worse as we're growing and expanding our services because we just keep adding things onto the same network and it's not built for it. It creates outages where we can't take payments from customers ... Dare I say, it's almost becoming business as usual that the systems crash every day ... Our Techos were taken off into the cluster (Interview with Roger on 27th October, 2020).

A Support Office staff member echoed the above views by stating:

We've got all these different product owners, all these different app owners and all these different support services within IT. Some are in this person's channel and some are under hardware. Some are under refresh, you know, it's a mess ... We can't serve our customers because this platform is down. The vendor manager will say, 'oh that platform was working. It isn't the platform, it is this little side app that sits underneath this platform that isn't working and that sits with this other person.' We don't fucking care. All we know is that our customers could not be served and our Frontline people are going, 'I'm so sorry, come back another day because we can't serve you' (Interview with Natalia on 9th November, 2020).

Minimising organisational risk is intrinsically tied to IT related issues within Service NSW. A Support Office staff member commented, 'We lost a lot of support in the privacy and risk space. The resources, both within the cluster and Service NSW weren't adequate and couldn't keep up with the change, the pace of Service NSW ... It took us away from our BAU' (Interview with Roger on 27th October, 2020). According to one interviewee, 'it was hard pushing shit uphill to get stuff done from the support structures ... The change was too quick without the right structures in place and we're still feeling the impact of that ... It has been a nightmare' (Interview with Jamie on 21st October, 2020).

In sum, as evident through *Back Stage Scenes*, the establishment of the Department of Customer Service and the Shared Corporate Services model gave rise to several counter subcultures in Service NSW as staff sought to deliver upon its collective mission, vision and customer centric culture. In the case above, the emergence of a wide-spread counter subculture emerged along managerial lines within Service NSW in relation to IT escalations in an effort to preserve business operations and to mitigate against operational destabilisation due to the introduction

of the Department of Customer Service's Shared Corporate Services model. These operational chasms between the two agencies appeared to be exacerbated due to other crisis issues that Service NSW employees were also managing at the time of the merger, including the 2020 bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion to Chapter Ten

This chapter applied the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001) to analyse the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. The first section discussed the enhancing subcultures within the Service Centres. The second section highlighted the orthogonal subcultures within Service Centres and Support Office through *Back Stage Encounters*. Within broader organisational subcultures, there were countless micro cultures which were bound by their own discreet rules and values. In this regard, *Back Stage Encounters* can be characterised by numerous micro cultures that act within broader orthogonal subcultures which function across an organisation's departments or business units. Subcultures and micro cultures were characterised by communication nuances, including breakdowns and various communication escalation processes that took place across each division. In micro cultures, agents and subjects of normative control with similar power status tend to come together in an effort to support one another in achieving their organisational and professional ends.

The third section discussed the introduction of the Department of Customer Service and the counter subcultures that emerged in Service NSW with the establishment of the Shared Corporate Services model. Of significance is the introduction of the Department of Customer Service's new overarching integrationist culture for its cluster agencies, including Service NSW. Due to the introduction of the Share Corporate Shared Services model, significant counter subcultures created operational chasms between the two agencies. Most notably, hiring and

recruitment and IT drastically slowed the pace of the organisation where staff members of Service NSW established strong counter subcultures along occupational lines in order to preserve and reassert its mission, values and customer centric 'DNA' culture in an effort to continue to serve its customers. In short, counter subcultures emerged by creating mitigation strategies to ensure the organisation achieved its BAU operations and so that staff could achieve their individual KPIs. The next chapter discusses the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture which expands upon the deliberate effort staff members made to create cultural ambiguity within the organisation.

Chapter Eleven

Ambiguity within the Service NSW ‘DNA’ Culture

Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001) makes it possible to analyse organisation culture in terms of inconsistency, transience, confusion and ambiguity. In other words, this perspective addresses cultural manifestations which may be contradictory in nature in relation to the organisation’s prescribed culture. The data below is examined from the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001) focusing on a final *Site of Enactment – Back Stage Relationships*. In this regard, the data presented in this chapter reflects several distinctions made between the Service NSW ‘DNA’ espoused culture and various aspects of the organisation’s enacted culture, including career roadblocks, social exclusion and suppressing the expression of critical thought and behaviour as enacted by staff members. The discussion begins by exploring the data which supports the *Back Stage Relationship*.

Site of Enactment – Back Stage Relationships

Various aspects of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture reflected ambiguity. As briefly highlighted in Chapter Ten, one example relates to the indistinctive nature of work carried out by Support Office. As mentioned, this organisational membership group demonstrates high levels of workplace flexibility and autonomy, that is, self-directed work which is supported by an opaque organisational structure which confuses both the Frontline and Support Office in relation to Support Office roles and responsibilities. This cultural ambiguity is reflected by several interviewees, one who commented, ‘In Support Office, you get that a fair bit, “it’s not my responsibility.” Then you have to figure out who are you supposed to be talking to and who and where do they fit and how many of the decisions they can actually make on their own’

(Interview with Shirley on 28^h September, 2020). Another staff member expressed, 'My first question to my manager after I got promoted was, can you draw me an org chart ... Can you tell me what divisions we have? ... She couldn't draw it' (Interview with Sam on 28^h October, 2020). Yet another staff member stated, 'there's always been a veil of mystery around Support Office in terms of what they do. What their job roles are' (Interview with Leo on 2nd November, 2020). With the opaque organisational structure of Support Office, confusion and ambiguity is felt amongst staff members in relation to Support Office work related tasks and responsibilities. In addition, there are various other transient and context specific cultural issues that promote ambiguity within the Service NSW 'DNA' culture because the espoused culture is not consistently enacted. These transient and context specific cultural issues include career roadblocks, social exclusion and the suppression of being permitted to express critical thinking as experienced by some staff members. This data is presented below in further illustrations of *Back Stage Relationships* utilising the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001).

In *Back Stage Relationships*, staff members display selves that reflect thoughts that are most tightly tied to intrapersonal concern or tension. Staff members, regardless of agent vis-à-vis subject status of normative control, use language and display behaviours that are not necessarily in alignment with the organisation's ideology and its prescribed culture because the 'culture' has personally worked against them in some form or capacity. In this regard, in *Back Stage Relationships*, each staff member less self-consciously selects their words, deeds and actions. For instance, as mentioned in Chapter Nine, the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture reflects a unified espousal of values and preferred behaviours, such as 'fairness,' a 'learning mindset' through 'taking initiative' by putting effort into one's career and doing so means that 'you can achieve anything' (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020). However, there appears to be severe career roadblocks that hinder some staff from being

able to pursue their careers in alignment with what the organisation claims it wants its employees to do. One significant career roadblock relates to staff members who were unable to progress their careers due to their work in regional and remote areas of NSW and geographical distance from the McKell Building. A regional Frontline staff member explained:

There's only one place that everything happens and it's at that building ... There tends to be a lot of resentment in Service Centre land because people go, we should be able to apply for this, but I can't because I live in [regional NSW] (Interview with Miranda on 5^h November, 2020).

Another specific issue relates to staff members within various teams or departments who were thought to be hindered directly by their line managers from progressing in their careers. For instance, despite repeated attempts by some Frontline staff to demonstrate competence and adherence to the 'Kaizen mindset' by consistently achieving their 'Customer Performance Indicators' (CPI's), some staff expressed that methods were used by their line managers to deny them opportunities. A previously employed Frontline staff member explained this by saying, 'If you're a good Customer Service Representative and you do your job well ... they make it very difficult for you to make that transition' (Interview with Debra on 9^h November, 2020). A Frontline staff member echoed the above sentiment by saying, 'Some people have been told by either their Service Centre Managers or their Regional Managers that, 'no, you can't move' (Interview with Candice on 5^h November, 2020). Debra provided her experience by saying:

On my first day, she told me that my job was to make her look good ... The Executives would say, 'I've I asked your manager last week to ask you if you can come down and

present but you haven't got back to me.' I would be like, 'I don't know anything about it. She hasn't told me' (Interview with Debra on 9^h November, 2020).

Consequently, this employee went from having 'two public engagements ... to nothing' because her manager cancelled all her local engagements and 'didn't give any reasons' to justify her actions. During her last month at the Service Centre, this employee sought a secondment and needed her manager's approval because 'when you apply for internal roles, it says on the bottom you need your manager's permission to apply for it. So, I had to tell her.' Her manager responded by saying, 'that's fine, I don't know how stable your position is here anyway. It's probably good that you're looking for other jobs.' Consequently, a public argument took place where the manager 'tore strips off me' resulting with the employee seeking medical treatment. The doctor claimed this was 'workplace bullying and this is not OK. You're not going to work. You are going to lodge a worker's compensation claim and you're going to make them sort this out.' Service NSW accepted liability, however at the time of the interview, the employee was 'still waiting for an apology.' Finally, the employee stated that, nothing happened to her manager and that she is thankful she survived the ordeal by saying, 'I know that I'm a strong person but that nearly ruined my life' (Interview with Debra on 9^h November, 2020).

As the above data illustrates, the Service NSW 'DNA' culture enacts inconsistencies. In this regard, deliberate career roadblocks or denial of career opportunities by line managers toward their direct reports are rather ambiguous matters in relation to the Service NSW 'DNA' prescribed culture. Where the organisation promotes both 'fairness' and 'inclusiveness' as part of its espoused culture, it enacts confusion and ambiguity in relation to who can and cannot progress their careers. Career roadblocks also occur within the Support Office, however, the reasons expressed by Support Office staff members appear to be of a different nature in

comparison to the Frontline. Here, the nature of informal hiring processes detailed in previous chapters, including through word of mouth, reflect cultural inconsistencies where ‘hard work’ may not result in opportunities for career progression. A Support Office staff member commented, ‘Directors may not have an influence on recruitment, but they have an influence on the person recruiting ... People who work really hard may not get the job, the promotion they deserve. Other people can potentially get the role because of who they know (Interview with Crystal on 12^h November, 2020). This same employee commented on her own ‘career roadblock,’ ‘I applied for a role I was qualified for because I have a lot of the different skills that were needed ... The person who got it was very close to a Director ... They previously never role modelled the engagement of our digital space, whereas I lived and breathed it’ (Interview with Crystal on 12^h November, 2020).

Career roadblocks also occur in the upper echelons of the organisation’s structure. A Director explained, ‘My Executive Director didn't give her a look in ... This person has been doing incredible things ... working monstrous hours ... She's doing it for the good of Service NSW. What's the risk ... to give her an opportunity, to give her something back’ (Interview with Natalia on 9^h November, 2020). As illustrated in previous chapters, others within the organisation appear to have access to career opportunities quite effortlessly, that is, without the requirement to formally apply for vacant positions because they have been ‘tapped on the shoulder’ (Interview with Natalia on 9^h November, 2020). For example, a Training Lead explained her experience of gaining employment at Service NSW after the Department of Customer Service was established by stating:

When April came around, my Director approached me and said I think your skills would be suited to this. She asked me would you be comfortable going for the role ...

She asked me if I would be capable of leading a team, including four others. That was pretty much how it happened. There wasn't really a formal recruitment process. It was ... are you OK to do it? (Interview with Patricia on 8^h September, 2020).

Unlike the employee's experience above, considerable cultural ambiguity prevents some employees from understanding why they are unable to progress their careers within the organisation. There are clear inconsistencies concerning the Service 'DNA' culture and the actual realities for some employees who wish to progress their careers but are hindered for various reasons. As they see it, these issues may relate to favouritism and nepotism or simply feelings of threat. In short, career roadblocks manifest as an ambiguous part of the organisation's 'DNA' culture across each of the organisation's membership groups. In this way, as demonstrated by *Back Stage Relationships*, the organisation's ideology and its espoused culture is not consistently enacted. Another fragmented perspective (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture relates to social exclusion.

As mentioned in Chapter Nine, the Service NSW 'DNA' culture promotes integration by claiming that the organisation nurtures 'an inclusive environment that is demographically representative of our community' (Service NSW, 2019; 2019-20). The management of staff from diverse backgrounds across the organisation, it is claimed, is a central focus for senior leaders who broadcast their efforts in this regard across various platforms to the largest audience possible in order to bolster their professional reputations. The organisation further claims that it leverages the power of diversity and benefits from diversity of thought in every action and decision that is taken where success in supporting customers is interrelated with success in fostering strong inter and intra organisational collaboration. This approach is claimed to be diverse, agile, cross-cluster and highly immersive. However, the data suggests that social

exclusion is a wide spread problem for some staff members within the Support Office and the Frontline. The reasons for social exclusion across the organisation's various membership groups differ considerably. However, one serious inconsistency within the Service 'DNA' culture pertains to members of various culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. In this regard, *Back Stage Relationships* provide a way of investigating the contexts in which staff vent, discuss and highlight contentious issues within their workplace or raise matters pertaining to external others in relation to themselves. For instance, staff members expressed countless instances of social exclusion and expressed the view that their careful management of social exclusion is an ongoing issue for organisational survival (Interviews with Alistair on 3^d November, 2020 and Samantha on 9^h December, 2020). How these staff members manage social exclusion or the perceived threat of social exclusion is a matter of interpersonal skill that requires careful management of *Front Stage Self Displays*. Indeed, when the issue relates to feelings of threat experienced by Anglo-Saxon staff members, there are moderate to severe intrapersonal repercussions for those being socially excluded. A Frontline staff member from a CALD background explained his experience of social exclusion by saying:

There are people who have friends in the Frontline who they bond with more easily than they bond with me ... They get a lot more preference to things like, you know, place of seating for that day ... more leniency when they're going off counter, going or coming back on and things like that (Interview with Alistair on 3^d November, 2020).

Another staff member explained how her name almost excluded her from obtaining employment when she said:

In my first interview, the hiring manager, he goes, ‘oh, I nearly didn't even give you an interview because of your name. It is so long and so hard to pronounce.’ It was hard to pronounce ... That was his answer, that was his comment. I'm like, what does that have to do with anything? (Interview with Candice on 5^h November, 2020).

And yet another staff member explained how she manages social exclusion. As she put it:

I don't drink ... Well, they ask, ‘why don't you drink?’ I'm like, ‘I just don't like it.’ They say, ‘Oh, OK. You're one of those people.’ I didn’t want that kind of stereotyping. Work is work, personal is personal. I am who I am and that's all you need to know ... Comments have been made ... I push it under the carpet. I have tough skin ... Sometimes the way I talk and try to express myself ... the body language I use ... I sometimes explain it in a way that's not correct ... it's something that does hold me back when it comes down to it (Interview with Samantha on 9^h December, 2020).

In addition, some staff members choose to socially exclude *themselves*. As one Frontline staff member explained, ‘I do my best to keep clear of not only the bureaucracies but the gossip too ... I just do my job and try not to get bored along the way because the work is very repetitive’ (Interview with Rod on 2nd November, 2020). Another CALD staff member explained:

This constant tracking, this way of working, I am not very comfortable with it. You haven’t got that ease of working ... That was something I wanted to move away from into a role which I can still add value to the business but be left alone ... I didn’t want to get into uncomfortable conversations with management, so I created a reputation for

myself where if I took a while to do something, it genuinely meant that there was something I couldn't understand (Interview with Alistair on 3^d November, 2020).

Rod provided an example of self-exclusion when he tries to keep a distance from various aspects of the organisation's social reality. As he put it, 'It's all about the numbers. When it gets really busy, tensions rise between staff, so customer service drops. I just stay clear of it, just do my job, don't invest too much of myself and stay away from others as much as I can' (Interview with Rod on 2nd November, 2020).

During his interview, Rod revealed his cynical attitude towards the organisation when he outlined the demands placed upon Frontline workers. As he commented, 'What is on the surface is not real. Things get swept under the carpet. Things aren't as controlled as they appear to be. You know, there is high turnover here' (Interview with Rod on 2nd November, 2020). Despite Rod's overt criticism of the organisation's ideological formulations, he negotiated the ambiguity by deliberately staying 'under the radar,' where possible and doing his work (Interview with Rod on 2nd November, 2020). In this regard, Rod demonstrates critical thinking by questioning the organisation's ideology while also distancing himself away from the culture by acting in alignment to the social norms and rules (Van Maanen, 1976) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture by presenting consistent *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*.

In short, despite the organisation's prescribed 'DNA' culture along with its ample policies and programs which claim to reflect an inclusive social reality, staff members highlight their experiences of social exclusion, in other words, enacted inconsistency and negotiated ambiguity related to the Service NSW 'DNA' culture, with some choosing to exclude themselves as a way to minimise the organisation's ideological formulations upon their subjective experience. Next

presented is yet another example of ambiguity within the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture as highlighted by the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001). In this regard, the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture suppresses the expression of critical thought for some staff members when they are performing their work as illustrated in *Back Stage Relationships*.

In *Back Stage Relationships*, staff members use dialogue that includes irony and cynicism or humour due to a particular situation, it seems, as a way to express underlying intrapersonal tension. In this regard, from the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001), the espoused Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture does not enact unification and integration. On the contrary, in certain circumstances, staff members suppress their disagreements and concerns on the front stage (Goffman, 1959), however voice their criticisms and confusion about the culture of the organisation in *Back Stage Relationships*. This dramaturgical change of employee language and behaviour between the front stage and the back stage (Goffman, 1959) suggests that some employees under particular workplace circumstances act in ways that are incongruent with the organisation’s ideology and its prescribed culture because the espoused organisational culture is not consistently enacted by all staff members across the occupational community. In this regard, the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture is not shared by all employees across each of the organisation’s membership groups. For instance, one staff member commented, ‘there’s not much point in having somebody like me ... who has experience and intellect if I’m just going to be told how to do my job. You end up feeling unengaged and disempowered’ (Interview with Evangeline on 15th September, 2020). A CALD Frontline staff member spoke of how staff members suppress his work by saying:

If I ask something, I’ll be answered back more sternly ... I tried dialling it down ...
Before, I was more proactive. If somebody was stuck with something, I used to walk up

and ask, 'I can help you if you are stuck. I know how to do this.' That approach was a mistake. They thought I was trying to show them up, which was never my intention ... I got quieter. I did not speak much ... I just did my work, served my customers ... When my annual review happened, my manager actually raised a point saying that she would have liked to see me be more proactive because I have these skills and capabilities. That was a deadlock situation ... She knew very well that I was trying to dial it down. She did not give me a good score in my annual review (Interview with Leo on 2nd November, 2020).

Another CALD staff member expressed his experiences by saying:

When I'm giving my idea or even if I'm giving a simple suggestion, I feel that people are a bit threatened to just listen. I always tell them, look, 'I'm not asking you to do this or that. I'm just saying that there is an option where you can do this' ... I've seen people use my idea, but they do not embrace it in public view (Interview with Sam on 28th October, 2020).

As the data above illustrates, some staff members who enter the organisation experience suppression in some form while performing their work. In such instances, staff members are pressured to suppress their expression of critical, independent thinking through their words and actions in order that other members do not feel 'uncomfortable' or 'threatened' (Interviews with Sam on 10th October, 2020 and Leo on 2nd November, 2020). The espoused Service NSW 'DNA' culture, therefore, reflects cultural ambiguity from the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001) because it is not clear which staff members and under what situations employees are able to freely express their critical thoughts when performing in their role. As a result, staff

members may find themselves grappling with various intrapersonal tensions as a result of such constraints. From this perspective, *Back Stage Relationships* may be used by staff members to manage intrapersonal tension and to help protect their membership status within the organisation.

Conclusion to Chapter Eleven

This chapter examined the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture from the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001) in regard to which it introduced its final *Site of Enactment Back Stage Relationships* through which it examined conflicts, disagreements and behaviours that are not necessarily in alignment with the organisation’s ideology and its prescribed culture. In relation to the espouse Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture, three important manifestations of cultural ambiguity emerged in relation to transient and context specific issues, notably, career roadblocks, social exclusion and suppressing the ability for some staff members to express critical thoughts through their choice of language and behaviour while performing their work. In this regard, the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture was shown to enact inconsistencies. While all membership groups were documented to experience all three issues, CALD staff members were increasingly documented as having the most serious workplace experiences. The final chapter of this thesis is presented next. It offers a discussion of the data as captured through the research period.

Chapter Twelve

Discussion

According to Spradley, ‘when an ethnographer studies another culture, the only place to begin is with the particular, concrete specific events of everyday life’ and progressively ‘move toward general statements about the culture under investigation’ (1979: 206-7). As mentioned in the methods chapter of this thesis, this critical analysis of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture is not literarily structured in congruence with a traditional ethnographic monograph. In this way, this chapter presents interpretations in relation to the research questions by highlighting the key findings of the study and their associated implications for theory and practice, notably:

1. What are the prominent characteristics of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture that affect every day work in the organisation, such as the organisation's values, norms, rules and rituals?
2. How have the machinery of government changes that were introduced in 2018-19 by the Department of Customer Service affected the characteristics of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture?
3. How were the changes experienced by Service NSW staff members when interacting at work?

To answer the research questions, Chapter Three delivered an interpretative conceptual framework of organisational culture, normative control and the self by fusing together key concepts to analyse the empirical data. The interpretative conceptual framework was designed to ethnographically decode the meaning of Service NSW’s ‘DNA’ culture and its subcultures from the perspective of employees across the occupational community. Firstly, the conceptual

framework utilised Geertz's (1973) concept of ideology, Barley and Kunda's (1992) managerial ideology combined with Kunda's (2009) concepts, notably, normative control and presentation ritual in combination with Meyerson and Martin's (1987) three perspectives of organisational culture, including integration, differentiation and fragmentation to critically analyse the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. In addition, the conceptual framework included the analysis of organisational artefacts, notably, jargon, stories, rituals, dress and décor as well as management practices by way of organisational tasks such as training, allocation of rewards, behavioural rectification strategies and hiring practices. Finally, to complete the assembly of the building blocks for the interpretative conceptual framework, Goffman's (1959) front stage and back stage concepts were combined with Van Maanen's (1979) scenes, encounters and relationships.

The Service NSW 'DNA' culture was critically analysed utilising ethnographic inquiry and qualitative methods by documenting three essential phases in conducting field work according to Van Maanen's (2011) methodological staging framework, notably, *Preparing for the Field*, *In the Field* and *The Write Up*. This methodologic approach enabled a rich and detailed critical analysis of the organisation's culture from three perspectives (Martin, 2001). The chosen methodological approach further enabled a critical analysis concerning how neoliberal ideology and Post New Public Management theory and practice has operated as a tool to design and implement various forms of normative control in the NSW public service as discussed next.

Neoliberal Ideology and Post New Public Management Practice at Service NSW

One key finding of Chapter Five was provided by the analysis conducted in relation to the research context of the studied organisation where various forms of publicly available documents were utilised as resources to describe the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. Specifically, Chapter Five provided an overview of

neoliberal ideology, Public Management, New Public Management and Post New Public Management and how these reforms informed public sector management since the 1980s. In this regard, Post New Public Management explained the rationale for the customer centric model of culture, an initiative that was established by the Service NSW Start-Up Executive Leadership Team in 2012-13.

Another important finding from Chapter Five included the critical context for understanding the decision to establish the NSW Public Service Commission and the important changes that occurred in 2019 with the establishment of the Department of Customer Service. With a highly detailed chronology of Service NSW since its establishment in 2012-13 by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, including an overview of its organisational structure, Chapter Five drew attention to the development of the organisation's customer centric ideology which provided the context for understanding the key findings that were documented in the empirical chapters of the thesis. To contextualise these findings, Chapter Six identified the organisation's continuous efforts at creating a distinct and irreplaceable social reality by those who possess a degree of ideological influence. Those with high degrees of ideological authority were shown to act as strong agents of normative control, including State Officials, Executive Leaders and Directors, the Service NSW Start Up Executive Leadership Team and Service NSW customers. As the data highlighted, ideological influencers particularly State Officials and Executive Directors of the organisation used their authority via a variety of platforms, or a combination of platforms, to disseminate narrative to their stakeholders: the broader NSW public; customers; employees; and other public sector organisations. These collective efforts promulgated a 'unique' representation of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture amongst staff members in comparison to other public sector agencies. Most significantly, the identification of each of the organisation's ideological sources of authority provided the key to critically explore

and further identify the organisation's various membership groups along with each of the three perspectives (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture through field work conducted at the McKell Building, located at Haymarket in Sydney's Central Business District.

In this regard, Chapter Seven offered descriptive accounts of Service NSW's organisational setting as captured during the course of field work, including the Service NSW McKell Building, Support Office and the Haymarket Service Centre. Key insights were found in relation to how staff members experienced work prior to the COVID-19 lockdown. In addition, Chapter Seven identified some of the symbolic localised languages used by the various membership groups of the organisation highlighting areas for subcultural exploration. The language used by employees was shown to shape their behaviour on the front stage to align with Post New Public Management practice, the organisation's ideology and its prescribed culture as highlighted by an analysis of the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001). The aforementioned chapters document extant Post New Public Management literature for grappling with the implications of customer centric models of culture for achieving multiple goals of public policy, a point to which this thesis will return by presenting ideas for future research which should aim to address the current literary limitations reflected in the scholarship. Nonetheless, the intricacies related to the findings regarding Post New Public Management practice, the organisation's ideology and its prescribed culture as highlighted by an analysis of the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) are highlighted in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten.

Normative Control and the Three Perspectives of the Service NSW 'DNA' Culture

The key findings presented in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight were central for the critical analysis of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture from the integration, differentiation and

fragmentation perspectives (Martin, 2001). These chapters presented descriptive and interpretative accounts across each of the three membership groups of the organisation from the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001), in relation to the organisation's ideological formulations and various forms of normative control (Kunda, 2009). Chapter Eight identified the organisation's membership groups, including Executive Leaders and Directors, Support Office and Frontline units and analysed the distinctions made between agents and subjects of normative control, particularly in relation to the wavering degrees of authority each possess in the course of carrying out their work. One key finding presented in Chapter Eight supported the notion that Support Office staff members fluctuate most between being both agents and subjects of normative control as they act as conduits of information between Executive Directors and Directors and the Frontline. Another key finding of Chapter Eight showed that Support Office staff were free to work from home and, therefore, experienced more autonomy and privacy to conduct their work. By contrast, this luxury was not shown to apply to those hired in Frontline positions. This is one reason why the organisation's Frontline staff were identified as the primary recipients of the organisation's ideological formulations which included several forms of normative control (Kunda, 2009), notably, behavioural management strategies as prescribed by the Service NSW 'DNA' culture.

As mentioned, Support Office staff members were also found to possess a greater opportunity to remain ambiguous in relation to their work responsibilities. Support Office staff were, therefore, found to be quite powerful stakeholders with an ability to elicit and otherwise influence workplace activity by the organisation's various membership groups by controlling information flows from the top to the bottom and vice-versa. This capacity to influence however, was found to work indirectly upon the experience of work for their subjects, that is, not in the form of grand performance ritual as in the case of Executive Leaders. Specifically,

indirect methods of normative control were found to be subtle and to occur through daily, informal, yet consistent *Front Stage Self Displays for Others* that cemented schematic images of the organisation's ideology, bringing its social reality to life across the organisation's various membership groups. Yet, while normative control is primarily about what the agents of normative control are thinking, doing and saying, including consequences for those accepting, rejecting or otherwise reacting to this form of control, the degree of control is always an interpersonal oscillating phenomenon. In other words, agents and subjects of normative control were routinely shown to enforce, reinforce and legitimate normative control (Kunda, 2009) efforts as identified from the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001).

Another key finding as presented in Chapter Eight identified Executive Leaders and Directors as those most required to reflect high levels of dramaturgical care as they move politically from one *Front Stage Site of Enactment* to another. Firstly, agents of normative control were shown to demonstrate behaviour in alignment with the organisation's ideology and its prescribed culture by very carefully selecting their words, deeds and actions. These cumulative *Front Stage Self Displays* encouraged staff members to internalise the organisation's schematic images of social order (Geertz, 1979) as evident through the field work at the McKell Building.

Moreover, Chapter Eight identified the diverse demographic profiles of Frontline staff. Frontline staff were found to be the least educated in comparison to the other two membership groups and also paid the least, yet were required to carefully manage their *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*, not only while serving customers, but also while in the presence of ideological authority figures, including Support Office staff and Executive Leaders and Directors. Most significantly, Frontline staff were found to have extremely rigid time boundaries to complete tasks, including closely monitoring their lunch and bathroom breaks. In short, one significant

finding of this critical analysis suggests that the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture places very serious dramaturgical demands upon the self, particularly for Frontline staff. Importantly, the dramaturgical demands placed upon Frontline workers appeared to be exacerbated as a result of the machinery of government changes which resulted in the Department of Customer Service’s substantial cost cutting, a decision which consequently continued to shape the ‘DNA’ culture in ways that were incongruent to the Service NSW core values. Moreover, the 2020 bushfires and floods along with the COVID-19 pandemic likely exacerbated the dramaturgical demands across all membership groups with Frontline units experiencing the greatest burden of these events to their subjective experience.

Chapter Nine analysed in greater detail the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture, including the assumptions, values and its various forms of normative control. Normative control was examined by way of various presentation ritual (Kunda, 2009) at Service NSW which were an integral and ongoing feature of how staff members should display themselves on the front stage (Goffman, 1959). In other words, overt attempts were made by agents of normative control to establish a shared definition of the organisation’s rules (Van Maanen, 1976) and social reality. In this regard, Service NSW’s ideological sources of authority were shown to educate, instil values and to a large extent, enact rules as well as monitor, reinforce and rectify *Front Stage Self Displays* through a range of behavioural management strategies when staff members were identified as acting out of alignment with its ideological formulations and the prescribed Service ‘DNA’ culture. In this regard, in many respects employees were unable to express their true subjective experiences, perhaps even their underlying feelings since personal and professional repercussions would be expected. For this reason, it is vital that organisational leaders treat employee engagement and or culture survey results with caution.

To extrapolate, the organisation's various presentation rituals were shown to be occasions for defining and positively reinforcing the 'unique' social reality of the organisation, specifically in relation to *Engaged, Empowered and Authentic Front Stage Self Displays*. In this regard, the organisation's social reality was shown to be perceived by its staff members as 'unique' in comparison to other slow paced, rule bound, public sector bureaucracies. Therefore, various *Front Stage Sites of Enactment* were identified in alignment with Chapter Three's interpretative conceptual framework, notably, *Front Stage Self Displays*, *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*, *Front Stage Scenes*, *Front Stage Encounters* and *Front Stage Relationships*. Each detailed nuances in relation to who participates in these *Sites of Enactment*, including how and when these *Sites of Enactment* occur within routine workplace activity. In short, Chapter Nine found that staff members displayed a self that adheres to the organisation's ideology and to various forms of normative control, including the organisation's prescribed 'DNA' culture on the front stage (Goffman, 1959).

The findings concerning normative control, the Service NSW 'DNA' culture and the dramaturgy involved in various *Front Stage Self Displays*, *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*, *Front Stage Scenes*, *Front Stage Encounters* and *Front Stage Relationships* are not considered exceptional, that is, Service NSW is not an exceptional case. Rather, organisations with strong cultures generally enact persuasive forms of normative control, a decision which places extremely high dramaturgical demands upon employees across the occupational community, often with very serious repercussions upon the self, particularly if breaches have occurred. In the case of Service NSW, the organisation reflects most acutely the enactment of Post New Public Management with the development of the 'DNA' culture, notwithstanding the desire to be perceived as customer centric by various internal and external stakeholders, however, one significant problem with this approach to culture management as reflected though the data highlighted in

Chapter Nine, is that there appears to be very little reflection or concern regarding the dramaturgical impact upon their employees, particularly those individuals on the Frontline. For this reason, careful attention must be paid to public sector organisations who aspire to implement Post New Public Management policy in an effort to create strong organisational customer centric cultures, such as the ‘DNA’ integrationist culture observed for Service NSW.

Given this point, however, how would an employee discern the realness of a *Front Stage Self Display*? As outlined in Chapter Three, by taking Trilling’s (1972) view, this thesis argues that the impact of normative control upon the dramaturgical experience of employees is a very significant and complex issue, because according to Trilling, ‘the word “Authenteo,” is to have full power over,’ where her or his response to the world is due to the ‘newly available sense of an audience, that of a public which society created’” (Trilling, 1972: 24-25). Hence, Trilling’s (1972) view takes the word ‘authentic’ as one which may represent individual hollowness, thereby, almost negating its meaning because ‘it does not propose being true ... as an end, but only as a means’ (1972: 9). Nonetheless, in alignment with Post New Public Management practice, forms of normative control in Service NSW were found to be purposeful for these forms encouraged employees to ‘take initiative’ and to ‘take charge of their careers’ by ‘taking advantage of the various opportunities’ the organisation ‘makes available’ to them (Interview with Audrey on 10th September, 2020). The dual nature of normative control, therefore, poses problems for contemporary organisations and this complexity must be examined in future research, a point to which this thesis will return.

In addition, normative control was found to positively reinforce behaviours that align with the organisation’s Code of Conduct and supported by initiatives such as the organisation’s rewards and recognition programs. In this way, normative control can be interpreted as being

purposeful and useful for some members of the organisation, particularly as it relates to self-interest, including the motivation to remain employed during times of structural change and crises. This insight, therefore, was interpreted to be exacerbated during times of immense structural change with the introduction of the Department of Customer Service in combination with global change, notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another key field work insight as presented in Chapter Nine suggests that many staff members could not pinpoint normative forms of control and their critical impact upon their subjective experience. While some staff members referred to *Front Stage Self Displays* by saying that everyone in the organisation is ‘authentic’ (Interviews with: Audrey on 10^h September, 2020; Josephine on 17^h September, 2020; and Robyn on 9^h November, 2020), most staff members found it difficult to express how they were ‘authentic’ within their work environment. As Kunda, (2009) noted, normative control is elusive and involves the gradual and imperceptible change in one’s own behaviour, in one’s presentations of self (Kunda, 2009). In this regard, one excellent example of normative control as identified in Chapter Nine documented both agents and subjects use of Workplace as a vehicle to sustain *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*. Workplace is used by staff as a medium for learning the rules of engagement (Van Maanen, 1976) and where staff are able to refine their social media content to obtain the broadest level of support, often, from the highest sources of ideological authority. In this regard, employees experienced pressure to self-promote their work and receive ‘likes’ from others. These self-promotional opportunities were shown to then positively reinforce the language and behaviour of peers who ‘like’ or comment on such posts (Interview with Patricia on 8^h September, 2020). As mentioned in Chapter Nine, employees regularly ‘like’ or ‘comment’ on social media posts without personally knowing which employee shared the post, nor the full contextual details of the work carried out. Such pressures of normative control were not critically examined by participants

in relation to the demands placed upon their subjective experience when pressured to perform such tasks.

In short, the findings of Chapter Nine are significant in relation the Service NSW 'DNA' culture where the organisation was shown to have struck the utopian balance by promulgating a strong integrationist (Martin, 2001) 'DNA' culture which encouraged staff members to tie their emotions and commitment to the organisation and adhere to its social reality through language and behaviour as evident in various *Front Stage Self Displays*. Importantly, without further critical analysis, that is, at a subcultural level from the differentiation and fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001), important findings would have been missed in relation to employee discontent or cynicism of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. While some employees were shown to be engaged, empowered and authentic which induced a sense of self-loyalty to the organisation, later chapters revealed that *Front Stage Self Displays* caused high levels of intrapersonal tension for some employees. In this regard, normative control was experienced differently depending on a range of factors, including the organisational membership group to which staff members belonged. Importantly, despite the organisation's cultural efforts at diversity, inclusion and belonging, the Service NSW 'DNA' culture was shown to enact significant disadvantage for some CALD employees.

In light of these insights, Chapter Ten offered key findings in relation to the differentiation (Martin, 2001) perspective of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. In this regard, enhancing, orthogonal and counter subcultures were identified within Support Office and Service Centres. The broader subculture of the Support Office was found to be orthogonal in nature, whereas Service Centres were found to be enhancing the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. Within these two distinct subcultures, micro cultures were found to exist along strong professional ties which

functioned with their own discreet set of rules and values depending on organisational tasks and activities.

Significantly, this chapter identified the various subcultures that emerged within Service NSW as a result of the establishment of the Shared Corporate Services model. Here, the establishment of the Department of Customer Service sought to introduce an overarching integrationist culture (Martin, 2001) across its cluster agencies, including Service NSW. Most notably, Service NSW BAU operations were found to be significantly impacted by the merger of the two agencies. Consequently, counter subcultures emerged within Service NSW along functional and occupational lines in order to preserve and reassert its mission, values and customer centric ethos. In short, subcultures had emerged and were identified via a range of means, including through communication breakdowns where mitigation strategies enabled Service NSW staff to achieve their business objectives and to preserve as best as possible, customer satisfaction levels. Importantly, many staff members viewed the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture before the merger as a ‘unique culture,’ however, after the merger, service levels were regressing to ‘RMS and RTA days,’ turning it into a ‘beige’ organisation (Interview with Natalia on 9^h October, 2020). These findings were supported by *Back Stage Site of Enactment*, notably, *Back Stage Self Displays*, *Back Stage Scenes* and *Back Stage Encounters*.

Chapter Eleven critically analysed the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture from the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001). Cultural ambiguity was found throughout the organisation’s enacted culture in relation to the roles and responsibilities of Support Office, in large part, due to the organisation’s opaque organisational structure. In addition, three important transient and context specific issues emerged through an analysis of the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001) which found that the espoused Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture was not consistently

enacted. Notably, career roadblocks, social exclusion and suppressing the expression of critical thinking emerged as transient and context specific enactments of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture with CALD staff members experiencing significant organisational disadvantage in relation to all three issues. These insights were found by empirically examining this thesis' final *Site of Enactment Back Stage Relationships* where staff members expressed discontent or cynicism about their workplace experiences as reflected in the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. In these contexts, as observed through participant language, employees were shown to present themselves less self-consciously while in various *Back Stage Sites of Enactment*.

One very significant finding of Chapter Eleven showed that employees who were negatively impacted by the Service NSW 'DNA' culture negotiated ambiguity by performing on the front stage (Goffman, 1959) when required, however also wished to distance themselves from the organisation's forms of normative control and took steps to do so. Another significant finding of Chapter Eleven reflected the critical thoughts of the organisation's employees who had actions taken against them that were inconsistent with the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. From the perspective of these employees, the organisation's ideological formulations, its prescribed culture and forms of normative control were found to cause intrapersonal tensions while they were performing their work. Interestingly, these participants were found to be more reflective of the impact of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture upon their work. In addition, these employees presented, at least during the research period, higher levels of critical intellect, reflection, a deeper connection to their *own* intrapersonal self and a stronger ability to interpret the meaning of their underlying subjective experience to their broader working life. These staff members also had another attribute in common: when they were asked about the values of the

organisation, they stated their *own* values, not the organisation's values. Interestingly, these staff members were not in senior leadership roles. The next section concludes this thesis.

Conclusion to Thesis

This thesis critically analysed the Service NSW 'DNA' culture during machinery of government changes with the launch of the Department of Customer Service and the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model along with its cluster-wide strategies. As mentioned at the outset, the structural changes that were introduced were a response to the decision by NSW Treasury in 2018-19 which was designed to produce a budget saving of \$5.373 million (35% reduction). This structural change resulted in the reorganisation of various NSW government agencies and their incorporation into the Department of Customer Service, including Service NSW.

The findings of this doctoral research are significant because the cost reductions and structural changes administered from the NSW Treasury required Service NSW to considerably adjust its standard business operations. Problematically, these structural changes also required Service NSW to accommodate the Department of Customer Service's overarching integrationist culture, including the Department's values and rules which were shown to be incongruent with its own customer centric ethos. Most notably, subcultures were established along managerial and professional lines within Service NSW to effectively deal with significant operational issues due to the value incongruencies experienced between the Department of Customer Service and Service NSW.

The study found that the collective effect of these changes placed immense dramaturgical demands upon staff members across the organisation's occupational units, which were experienced in different ways and to varying degrees of severity. One central finding of this study suggests that neoliberal policy and Post New Public Management practice coupled with strong sources of ideological authority who work as agents of normative control have within

their power to develop strong cultures which impact some employees positively and some negatively. The thesis highlights the nuances of these changes in relation to the broader impact upon Service NSW's operational activities. The findings also demonstrate that the subjective experience of employees across the organisation's various membership groups were significantly impacted. This thesis, therefore, argues that Post New Public Management theory and practice must consider the implications for public service employees in relation to work pressures which impact their subjective experience when operating in alignment with a customer centric model of culture in an effort to achieve organisational goals set out by public policy.

In order to understand the organisation's staff members *from their point of view*, this critical analysis utilised ethnographic methods by drawing on fieldnotes taken during the course of 2020 and qualitative methods by conducting 74 semi-structured interviews with participants. To provide additional research context, this ethnographic study incorporated auxiliary data as captured through annual reports, various organisational publications and website resources. The data found that agents of normative control encouraged their subjects to do what's right for the customer while enforcing a social reality that reflected an individual and collective sense of engagement, empowerment and authenticity as evident through the study's various *Front Stage Sites of Enactment*. However, as evident in various *Back Stage Sites of Enactment*, negative impacts were also expressed by subjects of normative control. In this regard, the organisation's Frontline staff members who are at the lowest levels of the organisation's structure, most culturally and linguistically diverse, least educated, worst paid, and rigidly time tracked experienced the most significant impact in relation to the dramaturgical demands placed upon them during the machinery of government changes, the COVID-19 pandemic along with the 2020 bushfires and floods. Frontline staff members were shown to dramaturgically perform on

the front stage for Executive Directors, Directors, Support Office staff members and, indeed, the organisation's customers, with these dramaturgical demands being constantly monitored, enforced and reinforced, including through a range of behavioural rectification mechanisms as administered by agents of normative control.

To investigate the impact of these changes, this thesis developed an interpretative conceptual framework and adopted an ethnographic and qualitative methods approach for data collection. In this regard, this critical analysis utilised participation observation and qualitative methods for the collection and analysis of empirical data on the Service NSW 'DNA' culture, its various subcultures, forms of normative control and how staff members across the occupational community performed their work during times of change. In this way, the thesis addressed a significant gap in the literature in relation to the impact of neoliberal ideology and Post New Public Management practice within a large public sector organisation, Service NSW. The findings of this critical analysis, therefore, advances knowledge in relation to Post New Public Management practice and the impact upon employees across the occupational community during a period of immense change in policy, public sector resourcing, machinery of government changes and work demands that arose from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 bushfires and floods. Accordingly, the thesis highlights the nuances of these changes, not only in relation to the impact upon Service NSW's operational activities as a result of the merger between Service NSW with the introduction of the Department of Customer Service's Shared Corporate Services model, but also, the dramaturgical demands placed upon staff members across the organisation's various membership groups as evident through changes in language and behaviour as staff members move from various *Sites of Enactment*, notably, from *Front Stage Self Displays* to *Back Stage Self Displays*.

Contributions to Scholarship

This critical analysis of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture utilising three perspectives of organisational culture, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation offers several contributions to management scholarship. Firstly, Chapter Two offers a multi-disciplinary literature review encompassing three distinct, yet diverse bodies of knowledge, notably, literatures concerning organisational culture, cultural control and the self. As mentioned, these literatures were not exhaustive by intention, rather, a selection of texts were carefully chosen, due to their influential nature upon subsequent empirical research which provided the necessary scope of this thesis. From the perspective of organisational culture, this thesis was concerned with the interpretivist and radical humanist perspective (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This thesis was also concerned primarily with ethnographic investigations concerning cultural control in organisations (Van Maanen, 1979; Kunda, 2009). Finally, this thesis was informed by sociological interpretations of the self (Goffman, 1959; Van Maanen, 1979).

Consequently, several disciplinary schools of thought were out of scope for this thesis and were highlighted at the outset of the literature review, documenting only essential universal debates and pertinent research limitations and gaps. As mentioned, research concerning organisational culture is traditionally rooted in the orthodoxy of functionalist science in search of generalisations and not interpretative science in search of meaning. Therefore, one significant contribution of Chapter Two was to bring to light this significant research oversight concerning the lack of critical analytic texts reflecting organisational cultures by utilising ethnographic methods, particularly in relation to a large NSW Public Sector agency that practices Post New Public Management, in this case, Service NSW, during times of immense structural change.

Chapter Three delivered an interpretative conceptual framework of organisational culture, normative control and the self by fusing together key concepts to analyse the empirical data. This interpretative conceptual framework was designed to critically decode the meaning of Service NSW's organisational culture and its subcultures from the perspective of employees across the occupational community and can, therefore, be used effectively for similar research interests across both federal or state government agencies. The conceptual framework utilised Geertz's (1973) concept of ideology, Barley and Kunda's (1992) managerial ideology combined with Kunda's (2009) concept of normative control and presentation ritual and Meyerson and Martin's (1987) three perspectives of organisational culture, notably, integration, differentiation and fragmentation to critically analyse the Service NSW 'DNA' culture. In addition, the conceptual framework included the analysis of organisational artefacts, notably, jargon, stories, rituals, dress and décor as well as management practices by way of organisational tasks such as training, allocation of rewards and recognition, hiring practices as well as behavioural rectification strategies. Finally, to complete the assembly of the interpretative conceptual framework, Goffman's (1959) front stage and back stage concepts were combined with Van Maanen's (1979) scenes, encounters and relationships. Chapter Three, therefore, presents an interpretative conceptual framework that can be used critically to analyse organisational cultures from the emic perspective, that is, from the perspective of employees specifically in relation to their use of language and behaviour while performing their work.

Chapter Four provides the methodological approach adopted for this critical analysis utilising both ethnographic and qualitative methods. This chapter also includes a discussion outlining the long-running inductive and deductive debates, including *Erklären-Verstehen* within humanity studies by highlighting the differences between interpretative scholarship in search of meaning, versus experimental scholarship in search of cause and effect (Lindlof, 2008). In

addition, Chapter Four provided a brief outline of anthropology and sociology with the emergence of The Chicago School of Urban Ethnography. This chapter, therefore, offers social scientists an example of how Van Maanen's (2011) methodological staging framework, notably, *Preparing for the Field*, *In the Field* and *The Write Up* could be used in future critical studies that seek to analyse organisational culture from the emic perspective. Thus, Chapter Four provides a detailed, valid and reliable methodological approach for which to carry out ethnographic and qualitative research within organisations.

Chapter Five provided the research context of the studied organisation. This chapter contained various forms of publicly available documents that were utilised as resources to describe the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) of Service NSW 'DNA' culture, including an overview of neoliberal ideology, Public Management, New Public Management and Post New Public Management that has informed public sector management since the 1980s. Post New Public Management explained the rationale for the customer centric model of culture that was established by the Service NSW Start-Up Executive Leadership Team in 2012-13. Chapter Five further detailed the chronology of Service NSW since its establishment in 2012-13 by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, including an overview of its organisational structure. Moreover, attention was drawn to the development of the organisation's customer centric ethos which provided the context for understanding the data documented in the empirical chapters of the thesis. Chapter Five also provided the critical context for understanding the decision to establish the NSW Public Service Commission and the important changes that occurred in 2019 with the establishment of the Department of Customer Service.

Chapter Six outlined the organisation's continuous efforts at creating a distinct and irreplaceable social reality by those who are both purveyors of the organisation's ideology and

those who possess a degree of ideological influence. As the data elucidated, ideological influencers used authorised platforms or a combination of platforms to disseminate a very specific narrative to a variety of stakeholders: the broader NSW public; customers; employees; and other public sector organisations. In this regard, Chapter Six highlighted the varying degrees of ideological influence between State Officials, Executive Leaders and Directors, the Service NSW Start Up Executive Leadership Team and the Service NSW customers.

Chapter Seven offered descriptive accounts of Service NSW's organisational setting as captured during the course of field work, including the Service NSW McKell Building, Support Office and the Haymarket Service Centre. Chapter Seven also introduced some of the changes experienced to staff members of the organisation due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Finally, Chapter Seven distinguished some of the localised languages used by the various membership groups of the organisation and how the organisation's institutionalised language shaped behaviour across each of these membership groups.

Chapter Eight specifically presented the various membership groups within the organisation, including Executive Leaders and Directors, Support Office and Frontline units. Chapter Eight analysed the distinctions made between agents and subjects of normative control, particularly the wavering degrees of authority each possess in the course of carrying out their work. One significant contribution to knowledge, as the data highlighted, reflects Support Office staff members fluctuating most between being both agents and subjects of normative control as they are conduits of information between Executive Directors, Directors and the Frontline. For this reason, the organisation's Support Office work indirectly as agents of normative control toward their subjects who work on the Frontline.

Chapter Nine critically analysed the integrationist perspective (Martin, 2001) of Service NSW's 'DNA' culture. This analysis included the assumptions, values and various forms of normative control. The organisation's presentation rituals were shown to be occasions for defining and positively reinforcing the 'unique' social reality of the organisation, specifically in relation to *Engaged, Empowered and Authentic Front Stage Self Displays*. In this regard, the organisation's social reality was perceived by its staff members to be unique in comparison to other slow paced, rule bound, public sector bureaucracies. Significant conceptual contributions are presented in Chapter Nine, including *Front Stage Sites of Enactments*, notably, *Front Stage Self Displays*, *Front Stage Self Displays for Others*, *Front Stage Scenes*, *Front Stage Encounters* and *Front Stage Relationships*. On the front stage, staff members display a self that adheres to the organisation's ideology and to various forms of normative control and the organisation's prescribed 'DNA' culture.

Chapter Ten presented the differentiation (Martin, 2001) perspective of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture by highlighting the organisation's various subcultures, including two specific subcultures within Service NSW, notably, Support Office and Service Centres. Within these two distinct subcultures, micro cultures were identified to function according to their own discreet values and rules, particularly along strong professional lines. Additionally, this Chapter contributes new knowledge in relation to agency mergers with machinery of government structural changes. These insights were documented with the establishment of the Department of Customer Service and the introduction of the Shared Corporate Services model. As a result, Service NSW business operations were impacted significantly with subcultures emerging along functional and occupational lines, including hiring and recruitment and IT in order to preserve and reassert its mission, values and customer centric ethos. In short, subcultures and subgroups emerged within Service NSW where staff were shown to create mitigation strategies in order to achieve its business operations and to preserve as best as possible, customer satisfaction levels.

In addition, Chapter Ten contributes additional *Sites of Enactment*, notably, *Back Stage Self Displays*, *Back Stage Scenes* and *Back Stage Encounters* which demonstrate that both agents and subjects of normative control behave differently when the organisation's ideological formulations and its culture have not been consistently enacted.

Chapter Eleven discussed the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture by critically analysing cultural ambiguity. Three important transient and context specific issues were identified from the fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001) of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture, notably, career roadblocks, social exclusion and suppressing the expression of critical thinking for some staff members. CALD staff members appeared to experience significant organisational disadvantage in relation to all three issues. The primary contribution of Chapter Eleven is the thesis' final *Site of Enactment Back Stage Relationships*.

Finally, Chapter Twelve offered various interpretations made of the data at several levels of analysis. This chapter presented several key findings in relation to the critical analysis of the Service NSW 'DNA' culture from three perspectives, notably, the integration, differentiation and fragmentation perspective (Martin, 2001). Post New Public Management practice within Service NSW showed that ideological sources of authority promulgated a customer centric ethos by providing prescriptions of behaviour as detailed by the 'DNA' culture. Forms of normative control were found to encourage staff members across each of the organisation's membership groups to tie their emotions and commitment to the organisation, however, due to these efforts of normative control, some staff members experienced severe intrapersonal tensions. These forms included various presentation rituals along with the organisation's reward and recognition programs. Normative control was found to be directly used by Executive Leaders and Directors and indirectly used by Support Office.

Chapter Twelve also presented findings in relation to the differentiation perspective (Martin, 2001) and the organisation's various subcultures and micro cultures. One important contribution of Chapter Twelve suggests that the Shared Corporate Services model greatly impacted Service NSW BAU as supported by the data and reflected in various *Back Stage Sites of Enactment*. In addition, Chapter Twelve contributed new knowledge in relation to cultural ambiguity. In this regard, the espoused Service NSW 'DNA' was not consistently enacted and impacted staff members differently depending on their membership group within the organisation, with CALD staff members being at a greater disadvantage. These insights were found by empirically examining this thesis' final *Site of Enactment Back Stage Relationships* where staff expressed discontent or cynicism about their workplace experiences as observed through participant language and behaviour.

Limitations, Implications and Future Research

A significant research limitation pertinent to this critical analysis is the lack of comparable public sector organisations with ethnographically informed insights for which to evaluate the findings. While Service NSW may not be an exceptional case in relation to the research findings, it does appear to be exceptional from the perspective of customer centricity in comparison to other NSW public service agencies. In this regard, additional research is warranted to ascertain generalisability of the findings across other public sector organisations.

Another research limitation relates to the degree of senior leaders who participated in interviews. Broadly, access to employees was inversely related to hierarchical status within the organisation. In addition, the construction of the conceptual framework was limited in that it did not go as far as to make distinctive interpretations concerning employee emotions. Specifically, the conceptual framework adopted the use of Goffman's (1959) front stage and

back stage concepts without going as far as incorporating research concepts that could discern degrees of dramaturgical acting such as ‘surface acting’ and ‘deep acting’ (Hochschild, 2012). Deeper level insights concerning employee emotions under forms of normative control would drastically increase our knowledge in relation to the degree of claims made against the self when performing at work.

Yet another limitation reflects the COVID-19 pandemic as it caused serious limitations in relation to conducting a full ethnographic account of the organisation’s various cultures, particularly in relation to *Back Stage Sites of Enactment* which would have become more salient and, therefore, obvious as the researcher spent more time in the field. Therefore, under normal business constraints, that is, outside exceptional circumstances, researchers may benefit from ethnographically analysing how normative control impacts public sector agencies and the enactment of their various organisational cultures. Comparisons can then be drawn between these insights and the organisational cost cutting constraints that impacted Service NSW. In addition, while this thesis contributes knowledge in relation to Post New Public Management practice and implications for developing customer centric cultures for achieving the objectives of public policy, there is room to extend this research by investigating how public service agencies might reduce the dramaturgical demands placed upon Frontline units while still achieving organisational objectives.

In short, this critical analysis of the Service NSW ‘DNA’ culture offers both qualitatively and quantitatively driven social scientists’ ample opportunities for further empirical investigation. Firstly, ethnographers and qualitative social researchers could use the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Three as a means to research and critically analyse the full spectra of cultures within organisations, notably, an organisation’s prescribed culture, its various

subcultures and its micro cultures in relation to normative control and dramaturgical configurations of the self across various industry sectors by specifically adopting both *Front Stage Self Display* and *Back Stage Self Display* concepts. By applying a critical lens to ethnography for the study of organisational culture, the method has within its power to bring to the surface sophisticated means of normative control in richly contextualised forms in order to more fully ascertain the subjective experience of employees. In this way, the conceptual framework is transferable and can be applied to all types of industry sectors and organisations. Such research would be very useful in understanding how forms of normative control are shifting as organisations progress with 21st century workplace demands. In addition, as highlighted in Chapter Twelve, the conceptual framework could incorporate concepts that would discern degrees of dramaturgical acting such as ‘surface acting’ and ‘deep acting’ (Hochschild, 2012).

In addition, there are ample opportunities to empirically test the various means of normative control outlined in Chapter Nine with various indicators that might reflect employee *Front Stage Engagement, Empowerment* and *Authenticity*. Another area for future research could explore the boundary between the psychological and societally focused views of the self by providing a deeper analysis for the reasons that motivate *Front Stage Self Displays*. This future research might encompass Goffman’s (1983) Interaction Order and Freud’s (1920) superego and ego ideal.

Appendix I of this thesis has been removed as it may contain sensitive/confidential content

Appendix II | Participant Information and Consent Form



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Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name & Title:

Professor Lucy Taksa, Professor of Management

Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: An Ethnographic Study of Service NSW's Organisational Culture

You are invited to take part in a research study. Your involvement in this research is to assist in the development of a theory of organisational culture in relation to diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The purpose of the study is to understand how people engage, believe, think and act within the culture of the organisation.

This Participant Information and Consent Form tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this

document carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

The study is a Ph.D. research project and is being conducted by Theaanna Kiaos to fulfil her Ph.D. Management requirements under the primary supervision of Professor Lucy Taksa at Macquarie University and secondary supervision of Associate Professor Paul Nesbit. The outcomes of this research will therefore form part of a Ph.D. thesis. Research contact details are outlined below:

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If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in an audio recorded interview to gain an understanding of the organisational culture through your lived experience. Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study. There is no payment or other remuneration associated with this research.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. *Only the Chief Investigator/s (Professor Lucy Taksá, Associate Professor Paul Nesbit and the primary researcher/Ph.D. candidate (Theaanna Kíaos) will have access to the research data.* A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request. *Please contact Theaanna Kíaos at*  *should you be interested in receiving a copy of the research results.*

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. If you feel any questions that are asked throughout the interview/s, are too personal and sensitive for you to answer, you may choose not to participate in those questions by communicating the word “pass” to the researcher.

Notes will also be taken throughout the course of the interview to better analyse the overall findings and will be destroyed after the research has been completed

You may review all information generated by you throughout this research including your transcripts.

Research results will be published in relevant journal publications and through conference presentations however all participant details will be kept confidential.

All electronic data including consent forms will be deleted when the research is completed. During the research period, all electronic data will be kept in a password-protected file on the researcher's laptop.

All hard copy data will be kept at a secure location within the Chief Investigators Office at Macquarie University's - Department of Management, Room 235, 3 Management Drive, Macquarie University. This data will be kept for 5 years. After this period, hard copy data will be destroyed. The data in this research will not be used in any other research.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to allow us to collect your personal information for the purposes of this research study. This information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information and Consent Form, unless you consent otherwise.

I, *(participant's name)* _____ have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____

(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Name: _____

(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: ____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)

Appendix III | Interview Guide

Introduction

According to Spradley (2016), the ethnographic interview can incorporate three types of ethnographic questions in loose sequence including: descriptive questions, structural questions and contrast questions. Descriptive questions enable the researcher to collect a sample of the participant's language and are the easiest questions to ask in ethnographic interviews. An example of a descriptive question is "could you describe the organisation's culture?"

Conversely, structural questions, allow the researcher information about domains, that is, the basic units in a participant's cultural knowledge. Accordingly, structural questions allow the researcher to understand how participants have organised their knowledge, for instance, an example of a structural question is "what are the organisational values?"

Finally, contrast questions allow the researcher to find out what the participant *means* by the various terms used in their environment, that is, they allow the researcher to discover the dimensions of meaning which participants employ to distinguish the objects and events in their world. A typical contrast question might be "what is the difference between the culture in your department versus other departments?"

This research will encompass the three types of ethnographic interview questions as described above. Icebreaker questions will be asked before commencing the official ethnographic interview questions with participants to help build rapport.

Interview Guide

This research project seeks to understand organisational culture, change and identity in the workplace.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to talk with the researcher for approximately 60 to 90 minutes around two key areas:

- Your thoughts and experiences of the organisation's culture
- Your thoughts and experiences on culture change, verbal and non-verbal behaviours of employees and managers

This interview is completely confidential including the recordings and transcripts. Any quotes that may be used in publications will be de-identified. You will only be identified through interview number. The interview will be recorded and I will personally transcribe the interview material. Interview transcripts will be stored in my personal laptop and a secure Macquarie University server. Any names of other people that you mention in the process of the interview will be removed and replaced with a broad description of their role. Hard copies of your consent to participate will be stored in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years, then destroyed.

The data will be one of 20-30 interviews which will contribute to an understanding of organisational culture, change and identity in the workplace.

Do you have any questions before we commence the interview?

Research questions

This thesis explores the following key research questions:

1. What are the prominent characteristics of the organisation's culture that affect every day work in the organisation, such as the organisation's values, norms, formal and informal rules and rituals?
2. How have the structural changes introduced in 2018-19 by the Department of Customer Service affected such characteristics of the organisation's culture?
3. How have the changes been experienced by organisational members and have they affected the way organisational members interact in performing their work?

Icebreaker and opening questions

- Can you please tell me a little about yourself?
- Can you please tell me what attracted you to apply for your position in Service NSW?
- Can you share with me your career progression up until you started with Service NSW?
- Can you please tell me about your current role?
 - How long have you been in this role?
 - How long have you been in the organisation?
- Can you please tell me about your current team?
- Can you please tell me about your current department?
- Can you please tell me how you would describe how things are done in your workplace?

Research Question | Part One

What are the prominent characteristics of the organisation's culture that affect every day work in the organisation (including espoused organisational values, norms, formal and informal rules and everyday rituals)?

- How would you describe the organisation's culture?
- How would you describe the culture within your team and or department?
- Are there differences between the two cultures?
 - If so, can you explain the differences between the cultures?
- What do you think are the most important values of the organisation's culture?
- What do you think are the most important values for your team?
- Are people rewarded for adhering to the culture?
- Can you please tell me about some of the policies or procedures that contribute to the organisation's culture?
- What sort of initiatives are implemented to gain commitment and engagement from employees?

Research Question | Part Two

How have the structural changes introduced in 2018-19 affected the organisation's culture?

- Can you please tell me about the changes that have been made since 2018 to the structure of Service NSW?
- How have these changes impacted the organisation's culture in terms of expectations with regards to organisational norms, values and rituals?
- How have these changes impacted your department and or your team?

- How have these changes impacted your role and you personally?

Research Question | Part Three

How have the changes been perceived and experienced by organisational members?

- How have you adapted to the changes?
- Do you think there has been a difference between employees and their managers in response to those changes?

Research Question | Part Four

Have changes affected the way organisational members communicate and behave at work?

- Have you ever had to change your behaviour to fit-in since the changes have been implemented?
- Do you think that the structural changes have impacted how people relate to each other?

Closing the interview

Do you think there are any other issues that haven't been covered that you would like to add?

Appendix IV | NVivo Coding Scheme

Customer Centric Ideology

Sources of Authority

Service NSW Customers

Collective Employees

The Media

Service NSW Start Up Executive Leadership Team

Original People and Culture Team

Current Service NSW Staff

Premier's office

Minister's office

Secretary - Department of Customer Service

Service NSW CEO

Service NSW Executive Director for Service Delivery

Collective Executive Leadership Team

Organisational Culture – Integration Perspective

Organisational Artefacts

Organisational Dress Code

Organisational Jargon

Organisational Stories

Organisational Values

Presentation Rituals

Hiring Practices

Interview Questions

Interview Behaviours

Recruiters

Past Career

Perceptions of the public sector

Reasons for joining SNSW

Reasons for joining the public sector

Reasons to avoid other Government agencies

Reasons to avoid the private sector

Training

Formal Training

DNA Training

E-learning

Informal Training

Informal Rewards

Formal Rewards

Sanctions and Punishments

Policies and Procedures

Display Rectification Strategies

Formal Behaviour Rectification Strategies

Behavioural Improvement Plan

Face to Face Training

Informal Behavioural Rectification Strategies

Membership Groups

The Department of Customer Service

Executive Leadership Team and Directors

Support Office

Frontline

Organisational Culture – Differentiation Perspective

Subcultures within Service NSW

Support Office

Service Centres

Middle Office

Bridging Subcultural Gaps SNSW

The Department of Customer Service Ideology

The Department of Customer Service Values

Comparison of Subcultures

Experience of Change

Bridging Subcultural Gaps

Failed Attempts at Bridging Subcultural Gaps

Partner Agencies

Organisational Culture – Fragmentation Perspective

Career Roadblocks

Social Exclusion

Suppression of Critical Thinking

Normative Control

Normative Control Agents and Subjects

Normative Control - Dramaturgical Feedback

Normative Control - Displays

Authenticity

Productivity

Empowerment

Normative Control – Employee Outcomes

Career Progression

Continuous Improvement

Flexibility

Fun

Visibility

Normative Control - Sites of Enactment

Normative Control - Encounters (Front Stage and Back Stage)

Normative Control - Scenes (Front Stage and Back Stage)

Normative Control - Relationships (Front Stage and Back Stags)

Appendix V | List of Interviewees

No.	Interview Date	Pseudonym	Membership	Gender
1	10th September, 2020	Audrey	Support Office	Female
2	10th September, 2020	Jane	Executive Leader	Female
3	10th March, 2020	Louise	Support Office	Female
4	10th September, 2020	Henrietta	Support Office	Female
5	11th September, 2020	Juliette	Support Office	Female
6	12th September, 2020	Simone	Support Office	Female
7	13th September, 2020	Laura	Support Office	Female
8	14th September, 2020	Kimberly	Support Office	Female
9	15th September, 2020	Katrina	Support Office	Female
10	16th September, 2020	Katherine	Support Office	Female
11	24th September, 2020	Fiona	Support Office	Female
12	18th December, 2020	Jasmine	Support Office	Female
13	15th March, 2020	Elisa	Support Office	Female
14	11th July, 2020	Grace	Support Office	Female
15	10th September, 2020	Olga	Support Office	Female
16	15th February, 2020	Maria	Support Office	Female
17	16th February, 2020	Anna	Support Office	Female
18	17th February, 2020	Sophia	Support Office	Female
19	18th February, 2020	Alexia	Support Office	Female
20	19th February, 2020	Vicky	Support Office	Female
21	21st September, 2020	Vanessa	Frontline	Female
22	23rd September, 2020	Emily	Frontline	Female
23	15th September, 2020	Evangeline	Support Office	Female
24	28th September, 2020	Shirley	Support Office	Female
25	5th November, 2020	Candice	Frontline	Female
26	5th November, 2020	Miranda	Frontline	Female
27	11th September, 2020	James	Frontline	Male
28	8th October, 2020	Stan	Support Office	Male
29	15th October, 2020	Andrew	Support Office	Male
30	8th October, 2020	Coco	Executive Leader	Female

31	2nd July, 2020	Peter	Executive Leader	Male
32	17th September, 2020	Josephine	Support Office	Female
33	9th November, 2020	Natalia	Executive Leader	Female
34	11th October, 2020	Cathy	Frontline	Female
35	11th October, 2020	Elise	Frontline	Female
36	19th October, 2020	Anastasia	Executive Leader	Female
37	21st October, 2020	Jamie	Frontline	Male
38	27th October, 2020	Roger	Frontline	Male
39	2nd November, 2020	Pamela	Support Office	Female
40	2nd November, 2020	Rod	Frontline	Male
41	25th February, 2020	Caroline	Support Office	Female
42	11th March, 2020	Cleo	Support Office	Female
43	15th March, 2020	Nicole	Support Office	Female
44	20th March, 2020	Stephanie	Support Office	Female
45	21st March, 2020	Joanne	Support Office	Female
46	22nd March, 2020	Bettina	Support Office	Female
47	23rd March, 2020	Maryanne	Support Office	Female
48	24th March, 2020	Pauline	Support Office	Female
49	11th September, 2020	Polly	Frontline	Female
50	30th September, 2020	Thomas	Support Office	Male
51	10th March, 2020	Fred	Support Office	Male
52	2nd October, 2020	Frank	Support Office	Male
53	10th March, 2020	Steve	Support Office	Male
54	9th November, 2020	Debra	Support Office	Female
55	9th November, 2020	Bronnie	Support Office	Female
56	8th September, 2020	Patricia	Support Office	Female
57	1st October, 2020	Timothy	Frontline	Male
58	2nd October, 2020	Rhonda	Support Office	Female
59	3rd November, 2020	Suzie	Support Office	Female
60	24th February, 2020	Lilly	Support Office	Female
61	26th February, 2020	Carla	Support Office	Female
62	9th November, 2020	Robyn	Frontline	Female
63	20th May, 2020	Rihanna	Support Office	Female

64	2nd November, 2020	Charlotte	Support Office	Female
65	28th October, 2020	Sam	Support Office	Male
66	2nd November, 2020	Leo	Support Office	Male
67	3rd November, 2020	Alistair	Support Office	Male
68	4th November, 2020	Chelsea	Frontline	Female
69	14th November, 2020	Barbara	Frontline	Female
70	16th November, 2020	Inness	Support Office	Female
71	13th November, 2020	Becky	Support Office	Female
72	12th November, 2020	Crystal	Frontline	Female
73	10th November, 2020	Diana	Frontline	Female
74	9 ^h December, 2020	Samantha	Support Office	Female

Appendix VI | List of Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes: A - Social media posts by ideological influences taken between February and October, 2020.

Fieldnotes: B - Weekly update by Service NSW CEO taken between February, 2020 and October, 2020.

Fieldnotes: C - Living the Service NSW 'DNA' on 9^h March, 2020.

Fieldnotes: D - Service NSW Support Office taken between February and March, 2020.

Fieldnotes: E - Service NSW Service Centres taken between February and October, 2020.

Fieldnotes: F - Service NSW descriptions of McKell Building. Retrieved from:

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<http://happyantipodean.blogspot.com/2017/10/brutalism-five-mckell-building.html>.

[Date Accessed: 29^h July, 2020].

Fieldnotes: G - Customer Service Representative Performance Score Card.

Fieldnotes: H - Service NSW 'DNA' Culture Building Blocks.

Fieldnotes: I - Living the Service NSW 'DNA' training on 9^h March 2020. Discussion with participant.

Fieldnotes: J - Service Delivery Team Planning Day meeting and PowerPoint slides taken on 3^d September, 2020.

Fieldnotes: K - Service NSW Award Categories.

Fieldnotes: L - Service NSW Refugee Graduation Ceremony.

Fieldnotes: M - Discussions with the Department of Customer Service People and Culture Captured during February to October, 2020.

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