

University of Strathclyde

Department of Work, Employment and Organisation

In search of the *otherness* of self –

**An empirical exploration of employees' passage to emotional
autonomy in the context of organisational change.**

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**This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy.**

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Glasgow

For my big Other

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines employee's pursuit of emotional autonomy as a desire in the context of organisational change. In subjecting the employees to its dictates, organisational change demands them to be a certain way and act in certain prescribed manners (Fotaki, 2009, Driver, 2009a, Glynos, 2010). This impelled reformation of the employees' subjectivity at the dint of the organisation has been problematised for its assumption that the employee will and can invest her sense of self to the former (Essers, Böhm and Contu, 2009). This thesis addresses this problematic by examining how employees pursue a distinct sense of self – that can act and decide for themselves – through the concept of emotional autonomy (Noom, Marc and Meuss, 1999).

The concept of emotional autonomy is rooted in adolescent developmental psychology (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986, Ryan and Lynch, 1989) and suffers from the individualistic assumptions characteristic of the discipline. Yet, the concept's utility has been recognised for adults and the complex network of relationships that is the hallmark of their lives as intersubjective beings (McBride, 1990, Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006, Bekin, Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006). Therefore, one of the principal objectives of this thesis is to absolve the concept of emotional autonomy from its individualistic underpinnings and re-theorise it through a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective within the context of organisational change.

From a psychoanalytic perspective as well, autonomy has also been problematised for the impossibility of its attainment (Roberts, 2005, Stavrakakis, 2008). The author contends that despite the impossibility of attainment, the desire for a distinct

sense of self is recognisable and worthy of examination. Therefore, this thesis approaches emotional autonomy not as an outcome of the employee's struggle with the demands of organisational change; but as a pursuit of desire that is riveted with its own lacks, fantasies and indeterminacies (Kenny, 2009, Costas and Taheri, 2012). This thesis upholds a focus on the fragmentation of self that happens at the dint of the master signifier of change, which subjects the employee and impels her to transition from the self that is not subjected to the master signifier. Hence, the striving for emotional autonomy for an employee is about pursuing a distinct sense of self and navigating and coping with her fragments of selves. To this end, this thesis draws upon Lacan's theories of discourse to examine how the employees signify to others from whom they seek autonomy (Lacan, 2007a, Fink, 1995, Bracher, 1993), and of alienation and separation that theorises the subject's transition across her fragmented being (Verhaeghe, 2019, Moati, 2014, Lacan, 1998d).

The empirical investigation of this research was conducted in a UK based multinational insurance organisation, Aegis, that was introducing a new methodology for software development – Agile – within its digital transformation project of building a new software platform for underwriting. To fully appreciate the subtle intricacies and complexities of the context and the employee's struggles in it, the study integrated the methods of non-participant observation and interviews (conducted longitudinally) that lasted over four months (Sköld, 2010). The data gathered from this study amounted to observational notes from 181 meetings and 40.2 hours of recorded data from 58 interviews with 36 participants.

The analysis surfaced a range of subject positions that the participants assumed and shifted across to signify a new sense of self through their articulations of what it meant to be Agile. The examination of the significations of this right approach for the participants, implicit with the need to act and decide the way they deem fit, unpacked several complexities. These entailed the struggles to signify articulately and impel identification from others or subject others to specific positions towards defining their own self.

The evidence of emotional autonomy is found in the participants' addressing the needs of the organisation, its demand for change and the relational others in alignment with their own desire for doing the right thing (Moati, 2014, Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003, Driver, 2017a). Such serving of the needs of others through the pursuit of one's own desire is theorised as the discourse of the reflective. This discursive position is founded on the dialectization of the authority of the master signifier with new signifiers that addresses the lack in the master signifier, the others and the organisation at large (Fink, 1995). The conceptualisation of this position points to the interdiscursive spaces in Lacan's typology of discourse and emphasises the need to examine those.

This thesis contributes to the literature on organisational change and subjectivity by bringing into its fold a Lacanian interpretation of emotional autonomy that firstly builds a framework for analysing the intersubjective relationships of the participants. Secondly, it offers a perspective for analysing the employee's relationship with change and how the former copes with the demands and onslaughts of the latter. Finally, with this study, the author hopes to bring to the mainstream literature of organisation studies

the significance of researching project methodologies such as Agile, which have a far-reaching impact on how the employees act and identify with themselves, others and the organisation.

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CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION

The relationship between organisational change and the subjectivity of employees is intricate and nuanced because of the demands the former makes on the employees (Stavrakakis, 2008; p. 1050, Essers, Böhm and Contu, 2009, p. 130, Fotaki, 2009; p. 144, Driver, 2009a, p. 354, Glynos, 2010, p. 15, Arnaud, 2012, p. 1129). Organisational change has been theorised as a fantasy that shrouds its void and inevitable failure (Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007, p. 363) and impels the employees to lend meaning to its lack of substance (Essers, Böhm and Contu, 2009, p. 132). Mechanised through a system of signifiers and dominated by a master signifier, the process of organisational change imposes itself upon the employees (Fotaki, 2009, p. 149, Kenny, 2009, p. 219). Underlying such imposition is an assumption of the employee being an “empty receptacle of values, a nobody without desires” who will reconstitute their subjectivity to commit to the organisation’s demands for change (Essers, Böhm and Contu, 2009, p. 134). But the employee is not an “empty receptacle” (Stavrakakis, 2008, Essers, Böhm and Contu, 2009, p. 134). Therefore, the reconstitution of her subjectivity depends upon the employee divesting herself from emotional attachments to other discourses in her organisational life and investing herself in the new system of signifiers (Stavrakakis, 2008, Fotaki, 2009). Such investment is dependent upon the alignment of the employee’s sense of self with her desire and work (Stavrakakis, 2008, p. 1050, Driver, 2009a).

In such a complex context of organisational change, then how do employees pursue their desire for an ‘emotionally autonomous’ self? Emotional autonomy pertains

to an individual's assurance in her ability to act and decide for herself, independently of others (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986, p. 841, Noom, Dekovic and Meuss, 1999, p. 772, Noom, Dekovic and Meuss, 2001, Kudo, Longhofer and Floersch, 2012, p. 349). An examination of emotional autonomy has a couple of implications. First, the feeling of confidence in one's actions and decisions invites us to look at how the individual forms a sense of self. Second, the expression of such a sense of self in relation to a range of relational others (Zimmer-Gembeck, Madsen and Hanisch, 2011) points to a significant interrelationship that underlies the individual's being while both necessitating and complicating the question of autonomy (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

Both of the preceding implications present challenges for the exploration of emotional autonomy. The first challenge arises from the origination of the concept of emotional autonomy in the literature of developmental psychology and the discipline's assumption regarding a rational individual who forms a sense of self by overcoming the diverse and problematic influences in her life through detachment (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986, pp. 841 - 842). This assumption is at the heart of the Emotional Autonomy Scale formulated by Steinberg and Silverberg (1986), who theorise the process of gaining emotional autonomy as a progression from the stage of de-idealisation of others to detachment and non-dependence to individuation¹. These theorisations do not account for any indeterminacies in these transitions from one stage to another. Therefore, this thesis problematises the underpinning of finality in these phases and the transitions across those overlook the struggles inherent in these

¹ A more detailed evaluation of this is reserved for chapter 2, which provides a critical overview of the concept of emotional autonomy and its application in literature.

processes. Stephen Frosh (2011) posits that a significant drawback in approaching the individual's developing a sense of self by overcoming the heterogeneous and even antagonistic aspects in their lives misses the rich and profound insights offered by approaching the "splits and contradictions" as the very essence of the individual as a subject (p. 56). In keeping with Frosh's emphasis on examining the indeterminacies of how an employee forms a sense of self through subjectivity and towards absolving the theorisation of emotional autonomy from the problems of this positivistic approach, this thesis takes a Lacanian approach to examining emotional autonomy as a desire (as is explained further below).

The second complexity of examining emotional autonomy arises from the Lacanian approach to autonomy itself. The Lacanian literature in organisation studies sees autonomy as unattainable given the subject's subjection to symbolic authorities (such as organisations) and relationships embedded in the mechanisms of power and control (Roberts, 2005, pp. 630, 632, Stavrakakis, 2008, p. 1041). The challenge in theorising autonomy from a psychoanalytic standpoint is accentuated by the intersubjectivity of relationships that blur the boundaries between the employee's own self and her relational others (Arnaud and Vidaillet, 2017, p. 4). But this impossibility of gaining autonomy from others does not undermine the employee's desire to be a certain self that for an employee sustains the notions of what she "ought" to be, or even "have" to be" (Bicknell and Liefoghe, 2010, p. 323). In other words, the impossibility of autonomy from others is instrumental to the creation of desire for it, which further enables for the subject a wider world of knowledge and signification that she can

mobilise to navigate and cope with the complexities of her work life embedded in the alterity of the organisation (Costas and Taheri, 2012, p. 1200). Therefore, even if the literature does not engage with the concept of autonomy empirically, it recognises that such striving can be fundamental to the subject's existence within her socio-symbolic world (Kenny, 2009, p. 217). This thesis thus seeks to position itself in this void in the literature and bring to psychoanalytical studies of organisations an empirical examination of an employee's pursuit of her desire for emotional autonomy.

A Lacanian approach to examining employee's desire for emotional *autonomy* makes for an uncomfortable fit at the apparent level. It is not hard to name an array of Lacanian concepts and theories to indicate the futility of bringing autonomy to his oeuvre. But this thesis is here to persevere and explain that the very lack that Lacan celebrates in all of his body of work has created the symbolic space for desiring a Lacanian look at *emotional autonomy* (Contu, Driver and Jones, 2010). This desire is founded on an examination of what Lacan can offer to the research question, as is discussed below with reference to the theories of Kenneth Gergen's concept of saturated selves and a Foucauldian concept of self-formation.

Employees' relationships with others – such as their colleagues, managers, customers and the like – is a crucial point of consideration for examining how emotional autonomy can be attained. Organisation studies has long acknowledged that the employee is not an individual entity and is, instead, formed collectively by the influence of relationships and society at large (Al-Amoudi and O'Mahoney, 2016). The nature and dynamics of the interrelationship between the employee's self as a subject and her

environment have been examined from the perspectives of language, power and control (Contu, Driver and Jones, 2010). Gergen (1991) notably had approached this aspect through the conceptualisation of the saturated self that is overwhelmed by the partial entities imparted to her by her relationships. And the subject's extended capacity of engaging with the world and forming new relationships (enabled by technology) eclipses her authentic self, and the subject is left to be identified through her relationships. Furthermore, Gergen (1991) posits that words are meaningless and the subjects 'play' with those in their attempt to explore new experiences and relationships, within the socio-cultural bounds of their communities.

A Foucauldian approach to the aspect of the subject's interrelationship with others introduces the aspect of power to the equation, by thus differing from Gergen's almost utopic view of a powerless society based on a "commingling" of "disparate discourses" (Gergen, 1991, p. 257). In keeping with Foucault's theorisation of a panoptical society, organisations are approached as a site for power and control that orders the subjectivity of employees (Knights and Willmott, 1989, Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). However, the lack of agency of the subject in this Foucauldian perspective to subjectivity (Newton, 1998) was countered with the accounting of resistance to power as representative of the subject's participation in their own self-formation (Knights and McCabe, 2000, Skinner, 2012).

While both the concepts of saturated selves and self-formation capture the authoritarian influence of the organisation on employees, as discussed at the beginning of the chapter, they leave certain aspects unanswered for the examination of employee's

pursuit for emotional autonomy in the context of organisational change. Firstly, Gergen's (1991) theorisation of the saturated self does not delve into the complexities of the subject's relationship with the partial identities imposed upon her by the varied spectrum of her relationships and negates any possibility of her 'authentic' self's interacting with her 'inauthentic' self (Mascolo and Dalto, 1995, p. 183). It is possible that this exclusion was on account of Gergen's approach to words and the binary system of signification as meaningless. But in consequence, his insistence on the meaningfulness of words also ends up lending meaning to the word 'meaningless'. Gergen himself admits to this "oddity of defining a movement in terms of its antithesis, rather than its thesis" (Mascolo and Dalto, 1995, p. 182). To the author, this oddity says something about the nature of language that makes it so challenging for a scholar of Gergen's expertise and stature to say what he wants.

With regards to the Foucauldian approach to self-formation in response to the power of organisations, there is an absence of consideration for the relationship between employees. Though the focus on the relationship between the powerful discursive structures of the organisation and the employees it forms is important to the examination of the importance of organisational change. There is also an equal necessity to examine the dynamics of the relationship between employees and other members of the organisation (Owens, 2010), such as customers and contractors, as it is in relation to them that the employee's desire for emotional autonomy can be examined. Furthermore, the limitation of the subject's participation in its self-formation to resistance raises a question about the possibility of other forms of participation that encompass a range of

behavioural dynamics such as support, contestation, collaboration, encouragement and the like.

A Lacanian approach agrees with the interconnectedness of the subject and the relationships and socio-symbolic structures comprising her existence, as posited by Gergen and Foucault (Lacan, 2007a). However, it varies significantly from Gergen's theorisation, given the formation of the subject's self being centred in language. It is impossible to know anything about a Lacanian subject without and beyond language (Lacan, 2006). Due to the evidence of such structuralism in Lacan's theories of the Symbolic, there have been (unfounded) concerns about the possibility of agency for the Lacanian subject by critics who seek to subject Lacan to either the signifier of structuralism or poststructuralism (Parker and Vanheule, 2014). However, as will be demonstrated in this thesis, the Lacanian subject derives her agency in relation to the constraining and formative structures of language. This is enabled by Lacan's inverting Saussurian model of the signifier being greater than the signified and recognising the unsymbolised possibilities beyond language as a gaping lack that subsumes all of the symbolisable existence (Cederström and Willmott, 2007, Stavrakakis, 2010). The signifier both forms the subject but also give her the agency to resist determination because of its vulnerability to signification (Lacan, 2006). It is with consideration to these avenues of exploring the subject's relationship with others and with herself (mediated through language) enabled by lack and the subjection of the signifier to the many significations that this thesis takes a Lacanian approach (Cederström and

Willmott, 2007) and strives to examine the possibilities of emancipation from the lens of desire through mobilisation of his psychoanalytical theories (Gabriel, 2016).

1.1 Research issues

The examination of the desire for emotional autonomy from a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective is founded on the conceptualisation of subjectivity as well as intersubjectivity. Lacan's thinking is complex and even self-contradicting, and his oeuvre of theories is a language in itself that he understands best (Contu, Driver and Jones, 2010, Jones, 2010). As a result, in working with Lacan's theories, the author has been mindful of the danger of getting lost in his language at the cost of her own. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to introduce the conceptual considerations as guides into the Lacanian theories that this study mobilises and outlines the research issues that address the research question.

1.1.1 Employees as subjects

The first and the most important conceptual consideration is that of the employee herself. Therefore, the author will discuss this in more detail than the others. There are different perspectives on the relationship between organisational change and the employee's sense of self at large. On one end, there is an argument for the organisation to let the employees "just be (themselves)" (Fleming and Sturdy, 2011, p. 179), instead of moulding them and expecting them to deal with the uncertainty of their being (Townley, 1993, p. 537). On the other end, there has been resistance in favour of an almost humanistic perspective that considers employees to be independent entities, capable of dealing with challenges and making reasonable choices for themselves

(Bolton and Houlihan, 2007). Contrary to the view of organisations being controlling of employees' subjective being (Fleming and Sturdy, 2011), this thesis posits that the organisations' discourses, norms and plans for change as "fantastic constructs" which offer the employees opportunities to identify with and explore the possibilities of their being through their efforts at investing or divesting themselves from it (Johnsen and Gudmand-Høyer, 2010, p. 341). Furthermore, separate from taking a humanistic view of employees as authentic, independent and capable (Bolton and Houlihan, 2007), this thesis positions employees as subjects and upholds their indeterminacies that surface in their complex identificatory relationship with organisations (Johnsen and Gudmand-Høyer, 2010, O'Byrne, 2011).

The subject, for Lacan, is an intricate, inconsistent and ephemeral being, perpetually subjected to the many socio-symbolic structures that form and norm her (Lacan, 1997a, p. 189). And it is the inconsistencies and ephemerality in her subjectivity that enables her agency and struggle to pursue her desires for a sense of self (Fink, 1995, pp. 41 - 42). Therefore, the trials and tribulations of the employees in relation to organisations are an interplay of fantasy of the organisations' promise (cf. Townley, Cooper and Oakes, 2003) and the employees desire to be a certain self (Harding, 2007, Driver, 2009b, Hoedemaekers, 2010, Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010). While the failure of these fantasies and desires is pre-destined and disillusionment is a natural outcome (Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007), the focus of this thesis is not on how or why the organisation tries to norm the employee and the failures of the employees to be themselves. Instead, it is to explore and examine the employee's search for a certain self

(regardless of the outcome) and celebrate the energy that the search generates (Driver, 2009b).

At this point, it is natural to question the relevance of exploring and examining the pursuit of a failed self and scrutinising the very existence of a self. The author does not want to imply any form of stability to these notions other than that of being a signifier that is eclipsed by its many significations (Lacan, 1997b). And the value of this research lies in examining the subject's resistance to determination by the signifier in her struggle to define it, which surfaces the dynamics of her desires, disillusionments, struggles, knowledge and passion as an entwined mess (Lacan, 2006, pp. 421, 549). Therefore, the author would like to caution against attaching any individualistic notions to emotional autonomy that assume a rational, intentional and independent being at its core (Frosh, 2011). The author's intention is to uphold the negative ontology of a Lacanian subject's being (Johnsen and Gudmand-Høyer, 2010) and examine the subject's desire for emotional autonomy as a desire for self instead of as a goal or motivation to act and decide (Gabriel, 2016).

1.1.2 Relational others

The second conceptual consideration pertains to the relational others from whom the subject desires emotional autonomy. From a Lacanian perspective, the relational others are not a mere audience to an individual subject's pursuits (Thompson, 2005, p. 20). Instead, they are both active participants in the pursuit and the authority that recognises the legitimacy of their pursuit (Ekman, 2013, Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003, Arnaud, 2002, Roberts, 2005, Sköld, 2010, Costas and Taheri, 2012,

Kenny, 2012). This will be elucidated in the review of literature in chapters 3 and 4 and in the findings of this study in Chapter 8.

1.1.3 The big Other

The third conceptual consideration pertains to what Lacan terms as the radical, big Other, which upholds the illusion of the originary wholeness that underlies all existence (Lacan, 1991a, pp. 244 - 246). As the source of all knowledge, the Other also comprises the socio-symbolic structures (such as organisations) that form and norm the subject (Arnaud, 2002, Stavrakakis, 2008). Hence, the subject's desire to know and be more than she is is always a desire for the Other (Lacan, 1998a, p. 38). Therefore, the struggle for the desire for emotional autonomy from relational others is also a struggle for an emancipated position in relation to the Other (Moati, 2014, p. 160).

With this presentation of the key points of consideration for a Lacanian approach to examining emotional autonomy during organisational change, this thesis now proposes the research issues through which it seeks to conduct the empirical investigation for this thesis.

I. How do participants orientate themselves relative to the prevailing socio-symbolic context?

This research issue intends to examine the symbolic and discursive framework that shape and surround the participants as subjects. This entails looking at the discursive relationships significant to them within the symbolic context of the

organisation through their use of signifiers. In this way, it focuses on understanding the participants' relationships with the organisational Other, which underlies their desires and significations of the master signifier.

II. How do participants cope with the continual unfolding of their changeful social context?

In an extension of the first research issue and its focus on the participants' relationship with the organisational Other, this research issue addresses the participants' encounter with the perpetual and all-pervasive lack that manifests in the socio-symbolic context, through theirs' and others' significations. The intent behind this research issue is to examine the ways in which the participants respond to and cope with these indeterminacies while striving for a sense of self. It thus focuses on how the participants seek to configure an alignment between their desires and the organisation's desire for the master signifier.

III. From where do they draw legitimacy, and how was this manifested in the relations they articulated?

This research issue seeks to unpack the symbolic resources mobilised by the participants towards articulating a sense of *self* to others. In doing so, this research issue focuses on the intricacies and indeterminacies of how the participants invest themselves in the organisational change and reproduce it to others. Examination of this issue is implicit with the study of how the participants cope with the changeful context, as mentioned in the previous issue and is an extension of the same.

With this outlining of the research issues, the chapter now proceeds into providing an overview of the context in which this study was conducted, the methodologies employed and the insights it generated.

1.2 Research context

The exploration of the research question and the associated research issues was conducted as an ethnographic study in a U.K.-based multinational insurance company, Aegis². Aegis was going through a challenging process of digital transformation, which entailed updating their legacy systems to a more intuitive, efficient and user-friendly platform called Synergy. For a number of reasons, the examination of employee's pursuit of their desire for emotional autonomy in the context of Aegis was made challenging by the digital transformation project. First, it was linked to the survival of the organisation in the competitive industry and hence, the project of digital transformation was a high-risk undertaking. Second, the organisation operates in a highly regulated environment and cannot afford to compromise on the "transparency and trust" of its stakeholders and customers (Deldag, 2020).

Embedded in this large-scale transformation was another change of implementing Agile - a new methodology for software development (Agile Alliance, 2019). Agile has gained prominence across industries as an effective and faster way of building software (Tam *et al.*, 2020). The layered nature of the change in Aegis, therefore, not only involved dealing with the risks and complexities of digital

² The organization, projects, softwares and participants are anonymized in this thesis and only pseudonyms are used.

transformation but also of interpreting, contextualising and coping with the new Agile methodology – a process that this thesis terms as *Agilisation*.

The implementation of Agile and its system of signifiers had the effect of transforming what the employees do, how they do it and even how they talk about the project. This was largely on account of the way the process for software development is designed under this methodology and the extensive use of its own distinct vocabulary, which will be elaborated in Chapter 7. Crucially, this study found that the Agile methodology made many demands on the participants, as is illustrated by the “personal characteristics” that are considered to be critical success factors for an Agile-based project (Chow and Cao, 2008, Misra, Kumar and Kumar, 2009, p. 1872). Besides the necessary factor of technical competence, employees are expected to have interpersonal skills, a sense of responsibility, the ability to change “work habits”, and willingness to continually learn and share knowledge, collaborate, communicate and negotiate, (Misra, Kumar and Kumar, 2009, p. 1872, Chow and Cao, 2008). With these formative and normative power of Agile, it emerges in this study as the dominant master signifier of change that situates and structures the participants and the discourses prevalent in the organisation.

1.3 Research methods and insights

The empirical investigation of this study is conducted through a multi-method approach that combines ethnographically-inspired non-participant observation and longitudinally conducted interviews. The study was conducted over a period of four

months, during which the author had observed 181 meetings, conducted 58 interviews with 36 participants, which amounted to 40.2 hours of recorded data.

The methodological approach for this study was designed with a focus on being guided by the accounts of the participants (Arnaud, 2012, p. 1129) and gaining insights into the intricacies of the participants' everyday lives (Cunliffe, 2010, p. 231). The multi-method approach was adopted with the intent of minimising the possibility of providing a reductionist view of "what is going on in people's minds" by focusing exclusively on participants' accounts (Watson, 2008, p. 122). Particularly, from the perspective of doing Lacanian research, the method of observation enables the examination of the varied discursive influences and relationships that both shape and position the participants (Kenny, 2012, p. 1180). This, therefore, facilitated the opportunity to study the sociality of the participants' work-lives by examining the discursive struggles that result in contestations and negotiations of meaning in an unfolding context (Sköld, 2010, p. 366, Kenny, 2012, p. 1180). Thus, enabling this research to go beyond the apparent meaning of signifiers in the analysis of the interview data and disrupt the significations of participants to access the underlying tapestry of psycho-social mechanisms (Parker and Pavon-Cuellar, 2014, p.6, Saville Young, 2014, p. 279, Parker, 2014a, p. 48).

The data collected was analysed using a three-phased coding method (Saldana, 2013, Charmaz, 2014). The first two phases of coding comprised the assigning of initial open codes and the subsequent refining of those codes to derive 14 categories of principal codes. The principal codes were further supplemented with the addition of

subcodes to each of those categories, which captured the nuances of the data. In the final phase, the principal codes were further developed through the technique of focused coding based on the interrelationship of different principal codes and the significance of their theoretical import for the research issues.

The study surfaced the complexity of this change process embedded in the struggles of the participants' interpreting and signifying the right thing to do by being or not being Agile while aligning or mobilising it with their own desire for self, knowledge and the organisational Other. These complexities of pursuing a sense of self manifested in three ways. Firstly, it led to the subject's desire to transition from her *non-Agilised self* to an *Agilised self*³. This surfaced the contradictions between the two fragments of the participants' *selves* and a contestation of desires arising from the attachment to one *self* over the possibility of another. The transitions to an *Agilised self* were also at times implicit with disagreement with the master signifier as the Other's desire for change. This surfaced the intricacies of subjection to the command of the master signifier and the limitations it placed upon the participants who sought to signify it as unsuitable for Aegis.

Secondly, the analysis surfaced the intricacies of the participants' varied relationships with others' signification of the master signifier and its suitability with their own desire for the organisational Other. This further paved the way to examine how the participants coped with these significations in their own struggle to articulate a

³ From this point in this thesis, the author will italicize the word *self* to refer to the different fragments of a subject's being. Thus, differentiating the usage of the term in concepts such as sense of self, which does not encompass the fragmented and inconsistent aspects of such a being.

sense of self and the impact it had on the mutuality of their subject positions in relation to the master signifier and the Other. This brought to the fore the contestations in the project about how the participants were meant to follow Agile, how suitable Agile was to the project and the like. These contestations constrained the participants' efforts to formulate their own approach to Agile by limiting what they could or could not do. Furthermore, this had the implications of changing discursive relationships in meetings and forming informal alternate structures based on the participants' identification or disidentification with others' approaches to Agile.

Lastly, it surfaced the tormenting and subversive powers of the master signifier that enabled or disabled the participants' pursuit of desire depending on the extent to which their significations led to its fostering and reproduction.

1.4 Significance of research and its contribution to knowledge

The questions of who we are and how we act are of insatiable interest in organisation studies (Mir, Willmott and Greenwood, 2016), and a plenitude of research has contributed towards enriching our understanding of the same. But the very nature of the questions and the enormity of human behaviour, work and organisations, inevitably leave things unexamined. The significance of this research, therefore, does not lie solely in bringing to the literature the concept of emotional autonomy as a desire but also in bringing a Lacanian perspective to examining the possibilities of the complex concept of autonomy.

The first contribution of this thesis addresses the Lacanian literature, which has successfully and critically brought to the domain of organisation studies the creative

approach of psychoanalytic theories ‘outside the clinic’, and have used its language to articulate important insights about organisations and employees (Contu, Driver and Jones, 2010, Arnaud and Vidaillet, 2017). Despite the varied and rich research, the literature has not dealt with the aspect of emancipation and autonomy even as an illusory pursuit. The literature is largely aligned to the poststructuralist notions of autonomy in individuals as an “illusion” and as an “untenable idea” (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, p. 436, Alvesson and Deetz, 2006, p. 267) and has critically presented how subjects might find themselves “curiously bound up with those (they) resist” (Roberts, 2005, p. 632). The author agrees with these points of view and does not in any way intend to imply that this research proposes the possibility of autonomy. However, she intends to bring to the Lacanian literature the struggles inherent in this pursuit for the unattainable autonomy that does not deter the subject from seeking it.

The second contribution of this thesis lies in offering a conceptual framework for the examination of the subjective struggles inherent in the subject’s manoeuvring across her fragmented *selves*. These subjective struggles enable a critical examination of psychic mechanisms and processes such as the primordial splitting and alienation of the subject by the Other and the subsequent identifications and significations of the subjects. By adopting a novel theoretical approach, this thesis suggests a framework for the deconstruction of these processes and of the subject’s desires for the Other and provides the conceptual resources for examining the psycho-social factors implicit in these struggles to *be*.

The third contribution of this thesis is the presentation of the potential of emotional autonomy in offering a perspective towards examining the immensity of (inter)subjectivity. Through emotional autonomy, this thesis proposes to examine subjectivity through the frame of the employee's relationship with the organisational Other and her relational others. For this examination, the thesis will contribute by offering a theoretical framework for analysing the subject's relationships with the varied O/others from a more nuanced perspective by including the multitudinous ways in which they are entwined in the existence of employees by looking at the contestation of desires inherent in these varied dynamics. This will extend the understanding of these dynamics beyond the need for recognition (Harding, 2007), lack (Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003), fantasy (Ekman, 2013) and power and control (Roberts, 2005).

The fourth contribution of this thesis relates to the empirical examination and theorisation of the alternate configurations of the employee's subject position in relation to the master signifier of organisational change. By positioning the participant's approach to the master signifier within the larger frame of socio-symbolic relations with the O/others, this study finds interdiscursive spaces in Lacan's discourse typology. This has two significant implications for further research on discourse as social relations. Firstly, these interdiscursive spaces are pivotal to the reproduction of the master signifier and hence to sustaining the fantasy of organisational change – a function that the extant typology does not account for (Stavrakakis, 2008). Secondly, it captures informal and tacit relationships of support and leadership that provide an alternate structure of collegiate relationships separate from the organisational structure (Costas and Taheri,

2012, Ekman, 2013). Through this critical examination of discursive relations, this thesis also contributes by presenting a renewed perspective on the role of dependence in the pursuit of the desire for autonomy.

The final contribution of this study is the integration of organisational change with Agile and the examination of its impact on subjectivity. The predominance of Agile in the technological sector has created the potential for extensive examination of how it aligns with employees' sense of selves and with the broader objective of attaining strategic change. Research on the efficacies and implications of Agile on employees' wellbeing (Syed-Abdullah, Holcombe and Gheorge, 2006) has largely been based on quantitative methods and has gravitated towards journals on Project Management or technical publications on Software Development. The only exception to this is a recent publication in Human Relations that examines the effect of Agile work practices on employee proactivity by conducting statistical analysis (Junker *et al.*, 2021).

But given its popularity in the industry and the demands it makes on employees; this research finds the potential of bringing research on how people adapt to Agile in different contexts to mainstream management literature on organisational change and employee subjectivity. With this outlining of the contributions of this thesis, the introductory chapter proceeds into laying out the structure of this thesis in the next section.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 presents a critical evaluation of emotional autonomy by drawing upon the existent theorisation of the concept in developmental psychology and in the literature

of sociology and management studies. The evaluation surfaces the problems in theory pertaining to the conceptual model of how emotional autonomy can be attained, thereby suggesting a need for re-theorisation of the same. The critique concludes with a discussion of two aspects of emotional autonomy – self-other relationship and articulation of knowledge – that need to be developed upon for purposes of re-theorisation. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with each of these two aspects respectively by grounding the thesis in the theoretical perspective of Lacan.

Chapter 3 deals with the aspect of the self-other relationship by examining what emotional autonomy may mean for a Lacanian subject. The chapter begins by first looking at how the subject and her sense of self comes to be in subjection to language and in relation to others. Though the sociality of existence in language is embedded in the interrelationship of signifiers, a deeper essay into this aspect is achieved through an analysis of the theory of the mirror phase. The conceptual discussion is followed by a review of the Lacanian literature in organisation studies. The review in this chapter is exclusively focused on the subject's relationship with language and with others. The subjection to language and the imbricated nature of the subject's relationship with others questions what it means to be autonomous for the subject, and the chapter ends with a discussion of the same.

Chapter 4 deals with the aspect of how knowledge and its articulation inform the subject's pursuit of emotional autonomy from others. This entails a discussion of the Lacanian theory of discourse with reference to its conceptual components and the configurations of those in the different discursive positions of the university, master,

hysteric and analyst. This is followed by a review of research based on Lacan's theory of discourse in organisation studies.

Chapter 5 mobilises the discussions from chapters 3 and 4 and evaluates how and outlines the questions left unanswered in the theoretical exploration of the aspects of self-other relationships and articulation of knowledge. Those gaps are then filled by drawing upon Lacan's theories of alienation and separation. These theories are significant for theorising the fragmentation of the subject's *self* and how she navigates this disjointed being in relation to her desire for the various O/others. The chapter then presents a conceptual framework based on a combination of the theories of subjectivity, discourse, alienation and separation. The empirical investigation is based on finding different configurations of these components of the framework in the subject's struggle to signify a sense of self.

Chapter 6 begins with a discussion of the epistemological positioning of the thesis in relation to other Lacanian research in organisation studies. The methodological approach distinguishes this research from the claims of knowing the unconscious of the people or of offering the Truth of people's psychical conditions. Instead, the thesis is positioned as an interpretive study that offers *an* interpretive version of the truth. The chapter then elaborates on the research design based on a multi-method approach. This is inclusive of an elaboration of the methods of non-participant observation and interviews. This is followed by details of research conduct and treatment of the empirical data. The chapter concludes with an elaboration of how the analysis was conducted through the application of a three-phased coding technique.

Chapter 7 begins the presentation of findings, which extends into two chapters. In this first chapter, the author takes the reader into Aegis and sets the scene by describing in detail the research context.

Chapter 8 delves into the ways in which the master signifier interacts with the participants' desires, fantasies and sense of lack. The chapter sets out with a description of how the master signifier presents a sense of self to participants by speaking to their desires. Next, an exploration of the ways in which the master signifier plagues the participants with an unrecognisable sense of lack is presented. Lastly, the chapter presents how ephemeral articulations of *self* are captured through participants' significations of the master signifier through a delicate positioning in relation to their knowledge and desire to signify a distinct relationship with O/others.

Chapter 9 mobilises the findings towards an elaboration of the research issues. The discussion of the first research issue is mobilised through the theory of Lacanian discourse while outlining how this thesis has found evidence of subject positions in the interdiscursive spaces of the typology. The second research issue is discussed in relation to how the passage between the different fragments of the participants' *selves* are traversed and coped with through the compass of their desires. Lastly, the third research issue delves into the ways in which the participants' articulations of *self* are positioned in the varied discursive relations and the impact it has on their deriving legitimacy.

Chapter 10, as the final chapter of the thesis, bears the onus of tying the different empirical, theoretical and analytical insights in this thesis towards a re-theorisation of emotional autonomy. The chapter begins with theorising the desire for emotional

autonomy through the varied struggles for a sense of self through an alignment of her knowledge, master signifier and O/others. This is substantiated with a discussion of how the concept of emotional autonomy contributes to the Lacanian literature in organisation studies and extends the application of Lacan's work in studying the subjectivity of employees. This chapter concludes the thesis with a discussion of the contributions of this study and the avenues for future research.

Before proceeding into the thesis, the author would like to end with a note on the writing style. First, the academics whose works are cited in this thesis are referred to as researchers. Second, I have chosen to refer to myself in the third person as an author. On one end, this choice was underpinned by my uneasiness at repeatedly using personal pronouns on account of my roots in a collectivistic culture. On the other end, it was inspired by the quest to signify *a* fragment of myself that the process of writing this thesis has created through the signifier of the author. This choice, however, does not imply segregation of the author from myself. Instead, my assuming the signifier is symbolic of acknowledging its profound significance for my subjectivity and of my *being* a work in progress.

CHAPTER 2 | EMOTIONAL AUTONOMY: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

2.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter offers a critical evaluation of emotional autonomy, with the intent to expound on what it means to be emotionally autonomous and how such autonomy is theorised to be attained or strived for in relation to others, and the problems inherent in these theorisations. These problematics are then examined in detail with reference to the two main approaches to emotional autonomy in development psychology – detachment (subsection 2.2.1) and attachment (subsection 2.2.2). This is followed by a review of the application of emotional autonomy beyond the developmental psychology literature and an evaluation of the contributions made by a sociological approach to the concept in subsection 2.2.3. Finally, section 2.3 mobilises the key aspects of the critique and paves the way for addressing the theoretical inadequacies from a Lacanian psychoanalytical perspective in chapters 3 and 4.

2.2 An introduction to emotional autonomy.

Emotional autonomy encapsulates an individual's claims to a distinct sense of self (Douvan and Adelson, 1966, p. 130, Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986, p. 843). As a concept, it is founded on two related but contradictory tenets. Firstly, the sense of self for an individual is derived from the micro-social context of her family and is, therefore, an effect and continuation of these relationships (Ryan and Lynch, 1989, p. 341, Guisinger and Blatt, 1994, pp. 104 - 105, Noom, Dekovic and Meuss, 1999, p. 771). Secondly, the autonomy, inherent with an implication of a certain breaking-away, is a

pre-condition to developing a sense of this is me (Parra and Oliva, 2006, p. 71, Steinberg, 2010). It is this contradiction of being a continuation and yet autonomous of others that has transpired much debate in the field. As a result, the first part of the definition of emotional autonomy – an individual’s confidence in her ability to decide and act for herself (Noom, Dekovic and Meeus, 2001, p. 581) – remains stable and consistent in the literature. But it is the second part of how it is achieved in relation to parents and other formative figures that remains unsettled (Beyers and Goossens, 1999, p. 755, Noom, Dekovic and Meuss, 1999, p. 771, Beyers *et al.*, 2003, p. 351). How then does an individual position herself in relation to the influence and expectations of others towards achieving emotional autonomy? The author finds that the literature, caught in the debate of attachment and detachment, is still striving for an answer to this problematic.

Before expanding upon the discussion of emotional autonomy, the author would first like to establish the concept beyond the limits of adolescence in developmental psychology and define the nature of relational ‘others’ as applied in this thesis. Studies on emotional autonomy have largely focused on adolescents, with the exception of a few that have examined it outside the framework of a phased developmental view (cf. McBride, 1990, Bekin, Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006, Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006). This thesis upholds firstly that concepts like adolescence and adulthood are socio-cultural constructions devoid of a singular universal meaning and are better understood as subjective transitions (Arnett and Taber, 1994, p. 518). Secondly, the characteristics of adulthood – such as individualization and self-control – can never be wholly attained

and are, therefore, always in the state of being pursued given the perpetual coping with the inevitability of lack (Lacan, 1991b, pp. 223 - 224). Lastly, this thesis also recognises the continued linguistic and affective engagement of an individual with others as she interacts and forms herself in the act of interacting (Parker, 2003, p. 104). As a result, it refrains from confining the formative influence of others to parents, teachers or other such relationships. In an organisational context, this could include the influence of colleagues, people who had previously worked in the organisation, or the person who held the subject's position before she did, and the like (Arnaud, 2002). The chapter now progresses into a review of the two distinct perspectives to the concept in developmental psychology based on these three aspects to the thesis' approach to emotional autonomy,

2.2.1 The detachment approach to emotional autonomy

The approach to emotional autonomy from the perspective of detachment was proposed in the formulation of an Emotional Autonomy Scale (EAS) by Steinberg and Silverberg (1986). In keeping with the notion of casting off infantile ties, the authors devised the EAS based on two principal concepts of detachment and individuation; by examining how adolescents appropriated the role of parents in their lives.

The concepts of detachment and individuation are interlinked in defining how an individual shifts in relation to others. Detachment, as a pre-condition, is emphasised upon as a crucial process of veering away from infantile objects of attachment, primarily parents (Freud, 1958)⁴. Such emotional distancing is mechanised by the recognition of

⁴ Anna Freud, the youngest daughter of Sigmund Freud had done extensive research on child therapy in the Freudian tradition of ego psychology.

reduced relevance of parental guidance and exposure to their flawed nature. In seeking to replicate the void created by such distancing, the adolescents attach themselves to new objects of love, amongst peers or others who are found to be inspirational or iconic in some ways (Parra and Oliva, 2006, Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986).

The EAS theorises detachment with reference to the concepts of de-idealisation and non-dependence (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986). While de-idealisation is a precursor to detachment, in the form of recognition of the fallibility of others, non-dependence is a consequence of the same. The literature captures this non-dependence as the limited reliance on the said others for counsel and support during crises (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986, Lamborn and Steinberg, 1993). Instead, the individuals are deemed to turn to other sources of support, such as peers. However, the dialectic of detachment and dependency is much more intricate and complex than a simple replacement with other figures of support and is often characterised by an oscillation that is driven by the desperate desire for perfection and guidance from those that the individual wants to detach from (Holmes, 1997). But this struggle for detachment and dependence remains uncaptured in the EAS and in subsequent literature based on it. Also, detachment in itself has no influence on an individual's striving for emotional autonomy; it is a pre-condition that leads to separation but does not necessarily lead to autonomy (Ryan and Lynch, 1989). It is thus that the EAS includes and concludes with individuation.

Individuation is defined in terms of "structural changes that accompany the emotional disengagement from internalized infantile objects" (Blos, 1967, p. 79). This is

characterised by stimulating a deepened sense of responsibility for one's own actions and drifting away from the need to be accountable and approved by the person(s) under whose tutelage one has grown up. Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) further elaborate on the concept in relation to an individual's ability to see herself as an individual distinct from others, defined to a large extent by what the latter do not know or understand about her. Inherent in such an understanding of individuation is the aspect of separation, and it is this that implies the element of wanting to be different from the de-idealised others (Beyers *et al.*, 2003). However, in recognition of the importance of attachment with social constructs such as a family, researchers have propagated 'healthy' individuation as a balance of separation and connectedness through a clear understanding of how an individual is similar and different from her many others (Beyers *et al.*, 2003). This then informs her choice in seeking advice and sharing her life and experiences with them.

In summary, this thesis finds that the EAS contributes to the literature by presenting the transitional nature of relationships with which an individual needs to cope and adjust. But it lacks an explanation of how these transitional relationships can be negotiated towards her pursuit of the desire for emotional autonomy and of the extent to which an individual can detach and individuate from others. Moreover, it begets the question of how much control an individual has in shaping her relationship with and detaching from others. This is not to imply that an individual does not feel the need to detach from others; instead, the point is to examine the very possibility of such detachment. Holmes (1997) argues that, firstly, detachment does not necessarily lead to autonomy as it is met with the indeterminacies of the individuals because of other

aspects such as fear, anxieties and ambivalence (p. 241). Secondly, expressed detachment in relationships often leads to the discovery of those in the individual's "inner world" (Holmes, 1997, p. 243). This further leads to the question of whether a disagreement with a person based on their judgement can necessarily lead to an emotional separation and whether emotional autonomy is possible despite such affective involvement.

2.2.2 The attachment approach to emotional autonomy

One of the most noted criticism of individuation and detachment as means to emotional autonomy comes from the perspective of John Bowlby's (1958) attachment theory. Attachment theory emphasises upon the "experience of the other rather than of the self" and thus, upholds the significance of "self-in-relation" in the psycho-social development of an individual (Guisinger and Blatt, 1994, p. 107). In a seminal article, Ryan and Lynch (1989) approached emotional autonomy from this perspective of attachment theory by problematising detachment. They argued that attachment is not a bond from which an individual must ultimately release herself to attain development. Instead, it represents a "dynamic relationship" that is shaped and moulded in keeping with the needs of evolving situations, thereby leading to individuation "*with*" parents as opposed to "*from*" them (p. 341 emphasis in original). Relational others are thus, positioned in this approach as stimulators and motivators for individuation, who provide encouragement, support and a sense of belonging and security. Furthermore, this connectedness with parents or formative others is stated to induce in an individual the ability to forge strong and secure relationships with others.

Given the theorization of attachment as a mechanism of shaping the self and the other, it cannot be viewed as a transient mechanism that can or needs to be overcome, unlike the concepts of dependency and detachment. Instead, it is a “durable” mechanism that evolves in correspondence with “situational factors” (Ainsworth, 1969, pp. 2-3). Furthermore, it suggests that connectedness in relationships allows a secure base for individuals to explore their sense of selfhood and enables the social skills necessary to traverse the dynamics of their social existence (Noom, Dekovic and Meuss, 1999, p. 772).

Despite the support for an attachment theory perspective to emotional autonomy, the literature has fallen short of operationalising this perspective to define how emotional autonomy can be attained through such a synergic relationship with others (Noom, Dekovic and Meuss, 2001, p. 578). Moreover, it raises the question of how attachment theory can enable an understanding of the self-other dialectic in relations that are characterised by authority and lack of understanding instead of encouragement. In other words, the attachment theory approach leaves the need for emotional autonomy in relationships that heighten or constrain the struggle for an independent sense of self unrecognised.

2.2.3 Emotional autonomy beyond developmental psychology

This subsection presents a review of the very few studies that have attempted to examine emotional autonomy in the realm of social sciences at large. To begin with, Kudo, Longhofer and Floersch (2012) examine emotional autonomy in adolescents as a precursor to leadership qualities and as a consequence of specific parenting styles.

Published in the journal, *Leadership*, this is the only publication in management studies to have approached the concept. The researchers apply the EAS towards analysing the role of others in an individual's pursuit of emotional autonomy. However, they examine this interrelationship without exploring the possibility of overlaps and complexities in non-dependence and individuation. The research draws upon attachment theory, without explicitly mentioning it, by positioning parents as a source of "support", "structure", encouragement and social competence (p. 349). As a result, the role of parents from whom the adolescent steers away to develop an independent sense of self remains unclear. The research, therefore, serves as an apt example of the problems with the EAS and the role of others in the literature, as discussed above.

Emotional autonomy has been borrowed into sociology-based studies and applied to the context of adults. Without the psychological connotations, the concept denotes an individual's ability to define herself as opposed to being defined by others through self-knowledge and mastery (McBride, 1990). In a study based on how working mothers develop a sense of self through their patterns of consumption, Carrigan and Szmigin (2006)⁵ draw upon McBride's conception of emotional autonomy and describe it as the freedom from the approval of others while recognising the complexities of their needs and desires. Though this sociological approach to emotional autonomy does not offer the conceptual resources to theorise it and suffers from the same problems as the attachment view, it does bring something significant to our understanding of emotional autonomy. It introduces the need to recognise the complexities inherent in the

⁵ The same conceptual approach to emotional autonomy has also been used in Bekin, Carrigan and Szmigin (2006).

relationship with others, which cannot be classified as attachment or detachment, and the aspects of building knowledge and asserting command in presenting a sense of self. This approach thus brings more nuance to understanding the configuration of how an individual manoeuvres for a sense of self in relation to others.

2.3 Towards re-thinking of emotional autonomy

The objective of this section is to help transition into a Lacanian psychoanalytical approach towards re-conceptualising emotional autonomy in the forthcoming chapters. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to present –

- ~ the key aspects from the evaluation of emotional autonomy with a focus on the problematics and gaps in the theorisation and
- ~ an outline of how these problematics are resolved through a Lacanian psychoanalytic approach in the next chapters.

The key aspects of the critique of extant theorisation of emotional autonomy, as indicated in the discussion above, are the nature of the individual's relationship with others and the role of knowledge and the importance of its articulation to others in the. The discussion in this section is, therefore, centred upon these two facets and is developed upon through the introduction of a few fundamental Lacanian concepts.

2.3.1 Self-other relationship

The relationship between an individual and her relational others is both complex and challenging (Arnaud, 2002, p. 700, Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003, p. 287). The detachment approach theorises these relationships as transitional that makes it necessary for the subject to outgrow an attachment and subjection to those (Steinberg

and Silverberg, 1986). But it does not account for the challenges in this given the individual's tendency to waver back and forth in separating from others (as suggested by Holmes, 1997). The attachment theory approach, on the contrary, overlooks the complexities of de-idealisation and the influence of others' needs and desires in approaching these relationships and upholds the notion of *working with* others towards attaining emotional autonomy (Ryan and Lynch, 1989). The author agrees with the detachment approach in its suggestion that relationships are transitional and recognises the tendency to de-idealise someone or the need to detach from them. But as suggested in subsection 2.2.1, she disagrees with the notion of an individual's being able to consciously detach from others and questions the very possibility of detaching in the first place.

The author, in alignment with theories of intersubjectivity, claims that relationships are multi-faceted and intricate, and the detachment-attachment binary does not do justice to the same. Intersubjectivity, as explained by M. Guy Thompson (2005), encompasses different perspectives on what comprises the subject's relationship with others and how the subject herself and her experiences are shaped by that of others. Lacan had based his approach to intersubjectivity upon the dialectic of desire in recognition of "the contest for power that is at stake in every human relationship" (Thompson, 2005, p. 20). This "contest for power" implies that while on one end, the subject is made to contend with others' desires impressed upon her through their use of language, On the other end, each subject is vulnerable to the recognition and approval of others underpinned by the need to control what the other sees of her (this aspect will be

developed with reference to Roberts (2005) in subsection 3.3.2). This complexity of desire in relationships will primarily be built upon through a discussion of Lacan's (2006) theory of the mirror phase in the next chapter (section 3.2). The theory of the mirror phase not only presents the ways in which individuals associate with one another – through their desire to be seen as a certain self by them. It also brings to the fore the social aspect of desire by making the various others a part of its scheme, further entangling the self and other.

The nature of intersubjective relationships described above resonates with the conception of relationships in the sociological approach, which recognises the intricacies of dealing with the needs and desires emanating from the various relationships (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006). But the tacit influence of these psycho-social mechanisms in relationships on an individual and makes it challenging for her to articulate her own wants and preferences, thus complicating the process of individuation (Thompson, 2005). The problem, therefore, does not lie in how a subject manages her relationship with others (through attachment or detachment). But it is in how this intersubjective-ness can allow the possibility for the subject to be emotionally autonomous by way of becoming a person in her own right, “*apart* from others and what they would have (her) think and become” (Thompson, 2005, p. 10 emphasis in original). In other words, what would it mean to be emotionally autonomous despite the impossibility of separating from others, and how can an individual then achieve it? The next chapter queries this very possibility and nature of autonomy through an examination of the ways in which the subject's relationship with this otherness is structured and mechanised in language-

based upon Lacan's theories and its application in the organisation studies literature (section 3.4).

2.3.2 Articulation of knowledge

Emotional autonomy, defined as an individual's confidence in making decisions for herself (Noom, Dekovic and Meuss, 1999), assumes the individual as having the knowledge needed for the same. While the literature has focused on how emotional autonomy is achieved through the appropriation of relationships, very little is said about the roles knowledge and its articulation play in the individual's pursuit for a more independent inter-relational position. Instead, the onus is placed on the de-idealisation of others and non-dependence. It is only in the sociology-based studies that the aspect of knowledge surfaces in importance (cf. McBride, 1990, Bekin, Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006, Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006). The author posits that the examination of how knowledge informs an individual's ability to act and decide for herself is equally important as the study of how she manoeuvres in relation with others. This is based on the perspective of knowledge always being "implicated in and in fact produced by subject functions", which makes the "discourses of knowledge and subjectivity" identical (Alcorn, 1994, p. 35).

The author posits that a closer look into the individual's application of her knowledge will enable the surfacing of the subtleties, complexities, and indeterminacies in the process and hence, enable a more rigorous theorisation of how an individual pursues emotional autonomy. This can be understood in relation to the example of a Software Developer who has been contracted to work on a project by a client

organisation. The existence of the Software Developer is shaped by the expectations and desires of her own employer, the client, and the demands of the project. The employee approaches and manages these varied forms of desires of the other based on her own desire to be a certain *self* and her opinions of the right way to work on the project. This opinion, stemming from her knowledge of software development or learning from past experiences of working on other projects and the like, therefore, has a role to play in the way the employee interprets what she needs to do and approaches her relationship with the varied others. The author suspects that this dynamic relationship between knowledge and desire often manifests in the way employees position themselves in relation to others based on their claims to know more or less than the others (as will be seen in the research of Hoedemaekers (2010) (section 3.3) and Sköld (2010) (section 4.3)). This aspect of configuring knowledge with desire and its articulation to others is the cornerstone of Lacan's theory of discourse, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

2.4 Chapter summary

The objectives of this chapter are to present the existing literature on emotional autonomy, emphasise the problematics inherent in its conceptualisation and pave the way for these problems to be addressed from a Lacanian perspective. There are two key aspects of the evaluation presented in section 2.2. First is the surfacing of the complex problems inherent in the theorisation of emotional autonomy in development psychology, with regards to the dynamics of the self-other relationship. Second is the inclusion of knowledge and the need to recognise the desires of others in the examination of emotional autonomy.

This thesis approaches the self-other relationships from the perspective of intersubjectivity, whereby the individual as a subject is not only an extension of her relations but is also embedded in the latter, as illustrated in subsection 2.3. The section makes a case for examining the dynamics of the *self-other relationship* and *articulation of knowledge* to others. The first facet captures the individual's intersubjective manoeuvring in pursuit of her desire. In essence, it lays out 'what' it means for the subject to pursue emotional autonomy. The second facet of knowledge and the subtleties of its articulations comprise "how" she does it. Chapter 3, in dealing with the 'what,' unpacks in critical detail the very basics of how an individual is formed as a subject, what defines and shapes her agency and ability to act, and of the nature of the subject's relationship with others embedded in desire. The discussion of 'how' is based on Lacan's theory of discourse (in Chapter 4), which presents a framework for analysing social relationships based on the impact they have on the subject's knowledge and desire and her ability to articulate the former to others.

CHAPTER 3 | FORMATION OF AN INTERSUBJECTIVE SUBJECT: THE SELF-OTHER DIALECTIC

3.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter explores *what* it means for a subject to pursue emotional autonomy from others through an examination of how the subject is formed in relation to others. The discussion here is primarily based on Lacan's theories on subjectivity by focusing on the formation of the subject (3.2.1) and formation of the subject's sense of self (3.2.2). The first part presents how the Lacanian subject comes to be in language and is situated in relation to others through the function of signifiers that makes all beings recognisable. In the second part, the formation of the subject's sense of self is presented with reference to the theory of the mirror phase – which encapsulates how the subject's perception of who she is, is formed by an interplay of a fantasy induced image of herself and the need to be recognised by others as that.

The review of literature in organisation studies follows the same pattern and is divided into two parts – the subject's relationship with language (3.3.1) and how that is shaped by the subject's relationship with others (3.3.2). The first subsection reviews research that focuses on the ways in which subjects approach signifiers that define them, how that signification corresponds with her want-to-be, and the challenges that the subject faces in the process. The second subsection reviews research that examines how these significations of the subject are shaped by the signification of others and vice versa.

In section 3.4, the author mobilises the key aspects from the above sections and evaluates how it addresses the problematics of emotional autonomy as presented in Chapter 2; and reflects on the nature of autonomy and how such autonomy can be pursued.

3.2 The Lacanian subject

The subject for Lacan is never an entity complete in herself. The subject is, as he once said, an object-in-making that is never complete and is relentlessly pursued. She is “...not a poet, but a poem. A poem that is being written even if it looks like a subject.” (Lacan, 1998b, p. viii). Thus, Lacan repudiates any form of formal-symbolic recognitions that confirm a subject’s being as complete. The questions then arise about how this poem of a subject is written, what keeps it from being finished and what does it mean to be perpetually written. The answer to these questions lies in the orders of the Symbolic, Real, and Imaginary that map the human psyche, and without which it is “impossible to understand anything” about the subject from a psychoanalytic standpoint (Lacan, 1991c, p.73).

The Symbolic is the “primary order” that is mechanised by the function of signifiers and organizes “human relations in a creative way, providing them with structures, shaping them.” (Wilden, 1968, p. 161, Lacan, 1998c, p. 20). The Lacanian subject comes to be in the order of the Symbolic and emerges in language even before she is physically born into the world. Therefore, through language, the Symbolic not only offers a way to understand human subjectivity and the social world but also forms and shapes it by being the very “...fabric of human culture” (Chiesa, 2007, p.8). In

Lacan's own words, the Symbolic order "...supports (the subject) and welcomes (her) in the form of language, and superimposes determination by the signifier..." (Lacan, 2006, p. 34). It is through this *superimposition* of varied signifiers emanating from the different symbolic clusters of her family, work, education, socio-political, cultural, and religious affiliations, and the like that the subject is rendered identifiable by way of being positioned in relation to other signifiers. For example, as the signifiers of man exist in relation to that of woman, teacher exists in relation to student and so on.

The determination of a subject by signifier has crucial implications for the nature and agency of the subject. Firstly, "(c)onveyed by a signifier in its relation to another signifier, the subject must be as rigorously distinguished from the biological individual as from any psychological evolution subsumable under the subject of understanding" (Lacan, 2006, p. 743). This makes a clear distinction between the notion of an individual in the literature on emotional autonomy and the subject of psychoanalysis. The Lacanian subject is unsettled by the very absence of finality and independence in being perpetually subjected to language and to others, and whose trajectory cannot be charted through a steady development (Parker, 2003, p. 103).

Secondly, the determination of the subject by signifiers limit her agency by subjecting her to its power. Fink (1995) explains the limitations imposed by the signifier upon the subject as a result of her being *sedimented* by "meanings determined by the substitution of one signifier for another or the retroactive effect of one signifier upon another...corresponding to Lacan's "definition" of the subject as that which one signifier represents to another signifier" (p. 69). This instance of the subject being *sedimented* by

signifiers can be illustrated by the example of a Software Developer working as a contractor for a client organisation, presented in section 2.3 of the previous chapter. The employee, in this case, is subjected to both the signifiers of being a ‘Software Developer’ and a ‘contractor.’ Not only does the signifier, ‘contractor’ represent her in relation to that of a ‘client,’ but it also entails a negotiation with ‘Software Developer’ that shapes her communication and ability to apply her knowledge and expertise by subjecting her to the needs and demands of the client.

The complexities of the subject’s subjection to the signifier bring forth the question of how she pursues a sense of self. More importantly, how does the subject contend with the multiple signifiers that inflict a certain way of being on her? Furthermore, is it possible for a subject to signify her true sense of self in its entirety? Tackling these questions requires us to first distinguish between the two forms of subjects – one, that is formed in language through clustering of signifiers endowed upon her, two, the subject’s own sense of self that is rooted in the Real and is uncaptured by the signifiers.

The Real is the order of *reality* that exists but eludes articulation (Lacan, 2006, p. 320). On the one hand, it ensures the insatiability of the subject’s in language through its all-pervading lack which, manifests as a symbolic void in between signifiers (Chiesa, 2007, p. 127). On the other, it intensifies the tension between the signifier and the subject’s sense of self and leaves her incapable of articulating all that she wants to say. The Real, though not susceptible to articulation in its entirety, can be accessed to some extent with the limitations it imposes on language but cannot be completely exhausted.

So, while advancement in scientific knowledge can manifest in new knowledge, there remains a residue of what has not been discovered or explained. Similarly, in organisations, despite the planned processes of change, the envisioned strategic future remains at large and will always be met with challenges. This residual Real thus, enables the perpetual lack as the impossibility of having a complete set of signifiers that accounts and explains everything (Fink, 1995, p. 27). And the mechanism by which the subject circumvents this lack of the Real is rooted in the concept of fantasy arising from the order of the Imaginary. The Imaginary, quite literally, is the order of the image and the imagination that presents the illusion of unity, synergy, and totality (Lacan, 1991c, p. 79). In other words, it presents a “model image of the original form” that is the Real (Lacan, 1991d, p. 59). While the elusiveness of this “original form” of wholeness leaves the subject with a yearning for that which is not, the illusion and lure of the “model image” provides a structure to the symbolic (Lemaire, 1981, p. 57). In other words, the Real guards the subject from all that she is not in language, and the Imaginary presents to her possibilities of being. It is with the intent to delve into the intricacies of both these overlapping aspects and evaluating how it shapes the subject that this section is divided into two parts – *formation of a subject* (subsection 3.2.1) and *formation of a subject’s sense of self* (subsection 3.2.2).

3.2.1 Formation of the subject

The formation of the subject in the Symbolic is orchestrated by the radical alterity of the Other. The Other, as the locus of all language, is the sum total of knowledge, and it is this hallmark of being an entity complete in itself that both

distances the subject from it and lures her to it (Chiesa, 2007). With language as its medium, the Other by way of instituting signifiers, lets the subject discover the very notions of “an *I* and a *you*,” which makes individuals recognisable as the speaking subject and the subject being spoken to, respectively (Lacan, 1997b, p. 274, emphasis in original). On one end, while the Other gives the subject the symbolic resources to pursue her desire, it also regulates the agency of the subject by limiting the very symbolic resources at her disposal; thereby, making the permanent unknowability of Real more palpable in subjectivity (Roudinesco, 2014, p. 69). Therefore, the Other, by its very presence, is representative of the lack of the Real.

The Other, by way of both forming the subject and keeping her from any sense of finality in her being, mechanises the dialectic of lack and desire in the subject. The lack becomes the very force that marks the possibility of a subject in the Symbolic vis-à-vis her impossibility in the Real (Lacan, 1991e) and the “want-to-be” able to say it all by knowing the Other (Lacan, 2006, p.520) makes desire “central to all human experience” (Lacan, 1991b, p. 223). This dialectical relationship of lack and desire underpins a sense of intentionality in the way the subject approaches signifiers and signifies them. In other words, a subject remains a subject only so far as she is a “desiring lack-of-being that wants to be” (Chiesa, 2007, p. 155), and it is through the mobilisation of signifiers that the subject desires to grasp the totality of the Other (Lacan, 1991a).

Bracher (1993) presents a critical analysis of the interrelationship between a subject’s desire and the Other by dissecting the nature of the desire – in terms of the desire to *be* or *have* the Other (p. 20). Even though this classification of desire for the

Other is yet to be used in the Lacanian literature in organisation studies, the author finds this classification to be crucial to understanding the motivation behind the participants' approach to signification in this thesis (as will be seen with reference to the analysis of the second research issue in section 9.3).

Bracher (1993) distinguishes between the subject's desire for the Other as the desire to *be* and the desire to *have* (p. 20). The desire to manifest as the desire to *be* recognised by the Other as being a certain fantasised self. Underlying this form of desire is the need for wholeness in language, rooted in the desire to know and say all. In discourse, this desire is mediated by the master signifier that is empowered with the fantasy of knowing the Other and is deemed to have a "pride of place in the code constituting (the) Other" (Bracher, 1993, p. 27). The pursuit of desire is, thus, consistent with the subject's identification with the master signifier and submitting to its demand for being represented by it.

The desire to *have* manifested as the desire to "possess" the Other or to be "possessed" by it (Bracher, 1993, p. 21). A crucial difference between this form of desire and the former kind is that subject's desire to *seek* to elicit the recognition of the Other, but the desire to *have* seeks to evoke in the Other the desire for herself. This desire to have the Other, therefore, "responds powerfully to the master signifier" (p. 29) and can manifest in ways of usurping its "pride of place" (p. 27) in the domain of the Other.

The pursuit of these desires is mediated by the mobilisation of signifiers into a signifying chain by interlinking signifiers with the purpose of insisting or of searching

for meaning as opposed to conveying a singular truth given the perpetuity of lack (Lacan, 1997c, p. 201, 2006, p. 418). In terms of the signifier, this manifests as the signifier being greater than and even resistant to a single signification (Lacan, 1997c, p. 205). This can be evidenced in the multitudinous ways in which even the most commonplace signifiers of gender, values, God, etc., are signified. In an organisational setting, this manifests in the different ways people understand and signify what a strategic future for an organisation should be like and how it can be attained, or even in the way employees variedly interpret the same job profile and responsibilities (Gabriel, 1995, p. 481). (This aspect is of crucial importance to the findings of this thesis, which unpacks the various ways in which the participants interpret and signify the master signifier, Agile, and their own job roles.)

The interplay of the subject and the signifier, as presented earlier, has a twofold impact on the subjects. While on the one hand, it subjects her to the indeterminacy of the signifier; on the other, it enables her to exercise her agency in signifying her own approach through addition and subtractions of signifiers in a signifying chain (Lacan, 1991e, pp. 192 - 193). As Lacan puts it - “What this structure of the signifying chain discloses is the possibility I have, precisely in so far as I have this language in common with other subjects...to use it in order to signify *something altogether different* than what it says...namely, the function of indicating the place of this subject in the search for truth” (2006, p. 421 emphasis in original). The purpose of the subject’s interaction with the signifiers is then not to search for or signify a definitive meaning but to situate the subject in the pursuit of signification. Therefore, it can be concluded here that the

formation of a subject in language is inclusive of making her recognisable through signifiers, positioning her intersubjectively vis-à-vis the relational others, and giving her the agency to signify her own approach to desiring the Other while coping with the meaninglessness of the signifiers. With this precursor of how a subject is formed and what she can do, the following subsection delves into how the subject forms an (imaginary) sense of self and how that is entwined with others.

3.2.2 Formation of the subject's sense of self

The formation of the subject's sense of self is a function of fantasy⁶, rooted in the Imaginary. As it is characteristic of the Imaginary, fantasy too is defined in terms of “an image set to work in the signifying structure...in its fundamental use, fantasy is the means by which the subject maintains himself...” (Lacan, 2006, p. 532). In other words, fantasy has a transformative function that converges images to form a sense of self that copes with the lack. As the subject discovers her desire – her want-to-be – in language and is forced to face the lack as constitutive of the very system of language, the fantasy induced image of the *self* “assumes the role of bearing the full brunt of desire” (Lacan, 2006, p. 549).

The subject's sense of self in being something other than the subject impels a certain transformation in her and has the effect of fragmenting her being (Lacan, 2006, p. 599). The transformation of this fragmented being is implied with a certain

⁶ In psychoanalysis both ‘phantasy’ and ‘fantasy’ have been used with very little difference in its connotations. While ‘phantasie’ is a German word for imagination – and was introduced to psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud - ‘fantasme’ is French for a particular product of imagination (as opposed to the act of imagination on a whole). But the term ‘fantasy’ suffers from a certain implication of triviality in treatment, due to which writers have been partial to using ‘phantasy’ in its stead (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p. 281). However, given the wide usage of ‘fantasy’ in Lacan's Seminars and in Lacanian literature in organisation studies, the author chooses to use the same terminology in this thesis.

negotiation with the different signifiers inflicted upon the subject, which the author suspects may not be necessarily compatible with one another. Therefore, it is with the purpose of unpacking the complexities and process of becoming something other than oneself that the author draws upon the theory of the mirror phase.

The theory of the mirror phase⁷ (Lacan, 2006, pp. 75 - 81) begins with how the subject comes to form an ideal sense of self. Lacan relates this to the moment when an infant comes to identify her own image in the mirror. The underlying assumption in this theory is that the consciousness of one's *self*, as *me*, is a sense that evolves with a continuous engagement with the external world and is not naturally present in the subject. The mirror is a symbol of the Other, which in its capacity to project an image of totality, upholds to the infant a reflection of herself in her (m)other's arms. This image of bodily unity contrasts with her feeling of incapacity caused by restricted body movements and dependence on others for sustenance. It represents an idealised version of the *self* that the infant (subject) misrecognises as herself and forms the notion of *this is me*. Hence, this *me*, symbolised by the mirror image, is an imaginary alterity enabled by fantasy and resonant of the lacking Real.

The subject's formation of an imaginary sense of self plays out in the realm of the Other, as it is in the Symbolic. The Other projects onto the subject a unified and complete image, which is then "governed by the voice of the other. This doesn't happen

⁷ The theory of the mirror stage was one of Lacan's earliest contributions. Even though it was initially theorised as a stage – referring to a particular “period in the process of psycho-biological maturation” (Laplanche and Pontalis, 2018, p. 252) – Lacan later appropriated it as a phase that recurs in varied ways throughout a subject's life (Lacan, 2006, pp. 54-55). It is in alignment with this view of the subject's relationship with the mirror as recurrent phase something that is also evidenced in the findings of this thesis that the author chooses to use the term phase instead of the widely used term stage.

at the level of the mirror-stage, but it happens subsequently through our overall relationship with others - the symbolic relations.”⁸ (Lacan, 1991f, p. 140). By connecting the gestalt of the image with the infant, the (m)other offers a symbolic mediation that is pivotal to identifications, and that underlies all social relations. The subject, therefore, in identification with the gestalt of the image, seeks to be recognised by the other as complete and autonomous. But these desires are vague; the subject in wanting to be this object for the other “can no longer recognize herself, in ways other than through the lack of being the object of desire itself” (Borch-Jacobsen, 1991, p. 200).

The inevitable vagueness of desire not only adds to the blurring of the boundaries between the self and other but also establishes that the desire for self is essentially a desire for the Other. Lacan describes this juncture as that which marks the transformation of the subject from a “specular I” to a “social I,” whereby the subject’s sense of self is inextricably bound with “socially elaborated situations” (2006, p. 79). It is at this moment that the “whole of human knowledge” comes to be mediated by the other’s desire – an aspect that will be dealt with in the next chapter (Lacan, 2006, p. 79).

In the analysis of the theory of the mirror phase, the author contends the need to recognise the salient presence of the relational other and the force it can exert on the subject’s pursuit of her desire. In other words, in addition to recognising the subject as the *specular self* in the mirror and as the perceived lack-of-being looking at the mirror, the author insists on the recognition of the subject as a child desired by the other. With

⁸ The reference here is to the relational other, with a small o.

reference to the theory, it can be explained by the constraints the mother puts on her child when the latter tries to walk on her own in an effort to overcome her inability and become her specular self. The child, therefore, is not only limited by her own incapacity but also by the restrictions imposed on her by her mother, who prevents her from trying until she finds the child to be ready for it⁹. This can also be understood with reference to the example of a contractor – Software Developer, whose identification with her fantasised *self* as knowledgeable is subjected to the signifier of being a contractor. The conflicting desires of both her employer and the client organisation limit the subject's manoeuvres to be anything but that¹⁰. The author emphasises this role of the other in further fragmenting and limiting the subject for two reasons. First, to underscore the role of the other in the subjective manoeuvres of the subject and avoid the pitfall of treating the other as passive in the process. Second, to appreciate the complexities and subtleties of the subject's fragmentation.

With such an exploration of the formation and fragmentation of the subject's *self*, the discussion now steers towards how the subject then traverses this distance between her lacking *self* and the idealised *self* as projected to her by the mirror. The answer to this lies in the process of identification – “transformation that takes place in the subject when (she) assumes an image...” with which she finds a semblance of herself (Lacan, 1991g, 2006, p. 76). This process of transformation through identification is categorised into two parts. In the first part, termed as primary identification, the subject recognises

⁹ This tacit influence of the (m)other has surfaced in the research of Arnaud (2002), Kenny (2012) and Ekman (2013) and will be discussed in subsection 3.3.2.

¹⁰ This relates back to Carrigan and Szmigin's (2006) recognition of the complex desires and needs of others on the subject's forming an independent sense of self (ref. subsection 2.2.3)

herself in the otherness of the image and adopts a signifier of being ‘me.’ In the second part, termed as secondary identification, she further consolidates this image through subsequent identifications in the Symbolic. In the identification of self through the signifier of ‘me’ – representing a different *self* – the subject is continually engaging in language and mobilising signifiers to signify that *self*.

Secondary identification enables the subject’s approach to signifiers in a signifying chain by structuring her desire through an idealised sense of self. It is thus that the theory of the mirror phase emerges as a subjective mechanism at the cusp of the Symbolic and the Imaginary (Lacan, 1991g, 2006, p. 54). And it is through processes of identification that the subject sees her “place” and serves as a “function of this place and of (her) world, (her) being” (Lacan, 1991h, p. 125). The mirror phase also serves as a metaphor for the sustenance and regeneration of the idea of this sense of self that cannot be restricted to a certain period in life. This finds support in Lacan’s establishing this mechanism of identifying with an idealised self-image beyond the physical bounds of a mirror –

“All sorts of things in the world behave like mirrors. All that’s needed is that the conditions be such that to one point of reality there should correspond an effect at another point...” (Lacan, 1991i, p. 49)

The author develops this positioning of the mirror as any symbolic resource that has a reflection and impels a corresponding action by comparing it to the impact signifiers have on subjects. The multiple signifiers of gender, beliefs, family, politics, profession, and more project an idealised image onto the subject, which then orientate her desire to

be in response to that image. The mirror phase thus helps in understanding how the idealised image becomes a point of reference for the subject that further underlines her sense of self by impelling her to identify, signify and transform.

3.2.3 Section summary

The purpose of this section was to present the key aspects of Lacanian subjectivity by looking at how the subject is formed in the Symbolic at the dint of the Other and how the subject's sense of self is formed through her wanting to be as a function of the Imaginary. Crucial to this discussion is – the subject's relation with signifiers that both subject her and enable her agency in signification and the conceptualisation of the subject's extimacy in the theory of the mirror phase. Also important to this discussion is the process of identification by which the subject strives to become that ideal image. This transformation is implicit with the process of signification whereby the subject identifies with signifiers that correspond to her idealised self-image and mobilises those in her signifying chain.

With the purpose of taking this discussion towards re-conceptualising emotional autonomy, the author emphasises the following two aspects –

~ *The subject's relationship with the signifiers that are endowed upon her and that she endorses to signify a sense of self – this implies looking at the ways in which signifiers inform, restrict or impel a sense of self in the subject and how the subject's response to it is shaped by the interplay of lack and desire.*

~ *The subject's relationship with others' signification of herself that is mirrored to her* – this involves looking at the ways in which others inflict a sense of self on the subject by impelling them to certain positions through signifiers. This will also help examine the ways in which the mirroring effect of these signifiers correspond with the subject's sense of self.

In light of these two aspects, the following section reviews the contribution of Lacanian theory to organisation studies and evaluates how the literature extends our understanding of the subject's relationship with language and the (O)thers.

3.3 Lacan in organisation studies

The Lacanian research in organisation studies has flourished into a range of meta-theoretical studies over the past decade. In reviewing the literature¹¹, therefore, the author has applied caution as to not overwhelm the reader with the magnitude of Lacan's work and studies that have drawn on it. As a result, the focus has been limited to concepts that are relevant to this study (Driver, 2013), namely the O/others, lack, desire, fantasy, the mirror phase, discourse, master signifier, and identifications (some of which will be discussed in the next chapter).

In the following subsections, the author will review the literature from the perspective of how the subject's interaction with signifiers impels and shapes her actions and the mechanisms that underlie this phenomenon (3.3.1). This will be followed by a

¹¹ The literature chosen to be reviewed here and in section 4.3 in the next chapter has been selected from an extensive database of resources gathered using Google Scholar and Thomson Reuter's database, Web of Science and the University of Strathclyde library.

review of how the signifiers imposed upon the subject by others position and form the subject and how the subject's position is entwined with that of the other (3.3.2). Given what is understood about the intersubjective existence of a subject, it is impossible to delineate the subject from others. Even while we look at how the subject responds to and signifies certain signifiers, the other's presence is salient to the process and is built into the way the subject understands the world around her. Therefore, the reason behind having a separate section for the subject's interplay with the others is not to demarcate a separation from the latter. Instead, it is done with the intent to focus exclusively on the way the subject is impelled and influenced by the desires and significations of others.

3.3.1 Interplay of the subject and signifiers

This section reviews the aspects of – how the subjects interact through signifiers by positioning those in relation to the signifiers of others (Harding, 2007), the ways in which signifiers impelled upon the subjects shape their perception of who they are and what they do (Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010), and how that perception is susceptible to lack that manifests in the struggle to articulate a stable sense of self through signifiers (Hoedemaekers, 2010). This aspect of lack manifesting between signifiers is then reviewed separately based on the research of Driver (2009; 2010; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2017; 2018) that examines lack as a creative force that drives the subject to fulfil that void by repeatedly articulating a sense of self.

The author begins by first drawing upon an Essai written by Harding (2007) that sets the scene for a venture into this complex and overlapping world of the self and others constituted by signifiers. The Essai outlines the impossibility of detaching the self

from the other and lays out the intricate web of the Lacanian subject as an employee, surrounded by the radical Otherness of an organisation, which makes the subject feel compelled to represent and address it in every act with relational others. To this end, Harding presents an engaging account of how we as subjects are driven by the innate tendency to respond to signifiers that have a bearing on our sense of self. She draws on her experience of interviewing a manager from NHS Trust as an academic, which was shadowed by their respective organisational Others as they engaged in an interplay of identifications, whereby one metaphorically held the mirror for the other.

Harding draws upon the theory of the mirror stage to define how the self is located in the alterity of the mirror image and is fueled by imaginary identifications that crave recognition and validation of the self as *me* from others. The embeddedness of the interviewer with the interviewee and of the self and the organisational Other exemplify this phenomenon. Thereby, hinting at the possibility of locating a subject only through her identifications that construct fragmented images of self, as Harding enlists them in the context as – “the academic self I myself generate, the academic ‘me’ generated by the interviewee, the managerial *self* generated by the interviewee, the interviewee generated by the academic, the interviewee *self* generated by the interviewee, and the two organisations, university, and NHS Trust, invoked as we offer questions and answers” (p. 1766).

The *Essai* does well in illustrating the imbricated nature of the self and other; both caught in a continual process of becoming. It also brings out the ephemerality of being by presenting the various *selves* that are generated in the process of interacting

with the other. This analytical presentation of an interview experience, therefore, helps lay the foundation for talking about Lacan in organisation studies and the subjective mechanisms of the mirror phase and identifications more closely and critically.

There are, however, certain aspects of the self-signifier relationship that the Essai leaves unaccounted. For instance, in presenting the many *selves* of the interviewer and the interviewee, Harding leaves out the *self* that responds to the signifier of ‘academic’ by acting in particular ways (cf. Harding, 2007, p. 1766). The author suggests that it is in these crevices of signifying a certain *self* that the transformation of the subject happens, wherein she responds to the image upheld by certain signifiers and seeks to actualise it. The author contends that to critically appreciate this aspect, the fragmentation of *selves* needs to be accounted for more comprehensively and critically. It is achieved in this thesis by drawing upon Lacan’s theory of alienation in Chapter 5 (in section 5.2).

Hoedemaekers and Keegan (2010) add to the conversation initiated by Harding (2007) by empirically exploring how the identity of a subject is shaped by “local organisational discourses” through the projection of a “specular image” of a performing self (pp. 1021, 1031). The researchers examine the various signifying approaches through which the participants examine the signifier of performance with reference to their selfhood. This leads to the surfacing of the indeterminacies of the participants’ perception of themselves as “performing subjects” (p. 1024). Hoedemaekers and Keegan posit that the signification of themselves as performing subjects is underpinned by the assumption of what the Other wants of them, and it motivates them to be that image by way of eliciting support and feedback from relational others such as supervisors.

The research does well in examining the power of the mirror image that projects an image of the employee that is only limited to her ‘performance’ and to which the subject responds by mobilising signifiers that are “proximate to the signifier ‘performance’ (p. 1038). However, with the enrichment of the Lacanian thought in this field, there is now a need to look more critically at the specular image that Hoedemaekers and Keegan (2010) have presented.

In this thesis, the author contends that the signification of *self* is riveted with its own struggles and subtleties, whereby the subject could find herself both enabled and disabled by the image upheld by others. Thus, a more nuanced examination of a subject’s relationship with her specular image can lead to what Stavrakakis (2008) presents as symbolic castration, which denies the subject the opportunity to signify one’s imaginary identifications and instates in her the desire for that which is not (p. 1045). This can manifest in struggles to realise the co-constructed specular image and result in a more critical struggle for recognition by forcing the subject to shift positions in relation to the other. While this is evidenced in a participant’s changing supervisors as the former person failed to provide her with the feedback and support she desired as a trainee, it is approached by the researchers more as a part of the process to signify (cf. Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010, p. 1035).

The author suggests that approaching symbolic shifts in relation to others is significant for understanding the process by which the subject struggles to become her mirror image. As it not only entails an appropriation of a suitable other in the role of a supervisor but also suggests the need of the participant to be recognised as a *self* that

desires feedback in order to become something else. The author suggests that looking at these intricacies of *selves* surfaces more nuance to understanding the subject's motivation and her efforts at signification – as is better appreciated by Hoedemaekers (2010) in a continuation of this research.

Hoedemaekers (2010) examines how an actualisation of a mirror image is interrupted with continual failures given the inevitability of lack. The researcher examines this lack by looking at the contradictions and slips in the narratives of the research participants. He draws upon the concept of identification to examine the distinctions that employees make between the images of themselves as ideal and non-ideal while examining spaces for resistance and re-signification towards the creation of their identity.

Hoedemaekers (2010) presents the example of a social care worker who believes she “cares” more about her job and is more conscientious than her colleague, and is willing to go the extra mile (p. 390). But interestingly, soon after, in her account, she articulates her struggle in being this caring *self* under the extent of work pressure, which makes her not do her work well enough. Such a struggle to be the idealised *self* falls into the crevices of that which does not correspond with her signification in which she positions her ideal *self* as being different from others. These contradictions and slips in the narrative indicate the failure to articulate this imagined *self* and make identity a re-iterative cycle of signification through “identification and breakdown” (p. 393).

A theorisation of these failures is significant in understanding the mechanisms of articulation in subjectivity and establishes the indeterminacies of being for a subject.

However, there are a few things that this research leaves unanswered. Firstly, it does not extend the understanding of the mirror stage beyond its lacking and masterful nature, the latter of which locates the *self* outside the subject. The author contends that there is a potential to examine the reciprocal nature of the mirror by which the image acts upon the subject, and the former is not a static or passive point of reference¹². This interaction between the seemingly powerful specular *self* and the nothingness of the *self*, looking at the mirror, implies certain aggression in this innate dependency that could be further examined in this research and will be useful for this thesis too (Nobus, 1999, p. 112).

Secondly, this research does well in presenting how lack emerges in the participant's narratives and unsettles their sense of self. However, it does not say much about how the participants cope with what they are not and in the ways in which it shapes their approach to others and themselves. Driver (2005, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2014, 2017a, 2018, 2021) responds to this effect of lack on the subject by theorising it as a creative force in itself that both ruptures and enables subjectivity.

Driver has made a notable contribution in examining the creative potential of lack in the formation of a subject from the perspective of identity work. Significantly, she has established an ontological approach to the lacking subject through the very indeterminacies of identity that appear problematic (Hoedemaekers, 2010, Brown, 2017). In approaching organisational identity from a Lacanian perspective, she positions the subject's striving to articulate an identity within the symbolic space of "collective

¹² Kosmala (2012) explores this notion in the interaction of employee subjectivity with the master signifier of competence in relation to the shifting and dynamic nature of both. This will be presented and discussed in the next chapter, where the author will also draw a parallel between the role of the mirror image and the master signifier.

identity narratives” (2009b, p. 64) in which the subject arrives in subjection to the signifiers of others. The prescription of such identity for the subject magnifies the sense of what the subject is not. This ensues in a struggle with the impenetrable lack, resistance to the existent discourse, and the desire to articulate a *distinct* sense of self. But more interestingly, the researcher approaches this lack not only as inevitable and perpetual but also as a mechanism that inspires the subject to “uniquely and creatively” (p. 60) circumvent the void through her ability to desire and fantasise that which is not, towards symbolically articulating what is.

Driver succinctly articulates the potential of lack “inherent in work” in her interpretation of motivation as a “way of...not finding what one is looking for while enjoying the energy that the search continues to generate” (2017a, p. 621). This conceptualization of lack as not something that needs to be fulfilled but as a driving force that propels the subject into action through desire and fantasy has been built upon in the researcher’s examination of learning (2010), stress (2014), leadership (2013) and narratives of a retired self (2018). The interplay between imaginary constructions of the self and lack takes a centre seat in these analyses as the subject strives for a sense of self by the ways of seeking to learn and overcome the impossibility of knowing. Or in the transitory process of leadership whereby the leader and the followers are both captivated and impelled by the fantasies of the other and lend to its failure.

The seeking of a sense of self or the struggle for liberation through subjection (to others or imaginary constructions of self) is riveted by a web of “unconscious desire” that surfaces in the interstice of “lack of having” and “lack of being” (Driver, 2013,

Driver, 2014). It is through these ruptures in the conscious-imaginary *self* that the subject is brought face to face with the Other, and she responds by seeking to address this radical Otherness by helping relational others or learning about the impenetrability of lack as a momentary liberation from the falsity of an imaginary construction, thus allowing the subject to shift from one construction to another in the process of becoming more aware and hence, more liberated (Driver, 2010, 2014, 2017a). On the same side, this perception of lack, through the shifting and recurring nature of fantasy, is what leads to the reproduction of lack that keeps re-instating the fantasy to capture the subject's desire (Stavrakakis, 2008, Driver, 2009b).

In this thesis, the author finds lack as crucial to the discussion on emotional autonomy and draws on Driver's approach to it as a creative force. This study pursues the multifaceted ways in which its elusiveness shapes the desires and fantasies of the subject to create their "work, self and organisations" (Driver, 2009b, p. 354) in a way that resonates with their own imaginary construction of self. Thus, bringing into the discussion of emotional autonomy the significance of the very lack that impedes the realisation of the same but is vital to the pursuit and the need to cope with it by helping relational others. However, there are two aspects in which the author's approach to lack differs from that of Michaela Driver. First, from an ontological and epistemological perspective, the author posits that it is important to recognise that significations inspired by desire (Lacan, 2006, p. 693) are both a response to lack as well as demonstrative of lack.

Second, Driver (and Hoedemaekers (2010)) leaves unexplored how this perpetual lack of not being the same as one's imaginary construction translates in relation to the shifting nature of a subject's position in the intersubjectivity of her existence. For instance, the subject's inability to find semblance in the directives of the management and the struggle to cope with it could lay grounds for symbolic shifts in relation to others. The author posits that an analysis of the ways in which the subject copes with lack socially can also offer a closer understanding of the dynamics of the self-other relationships.

3.3.2 Interplay of the subject and others.

In this subsection, the author delves into the subject's sociality by looking at how the subject is influenced by others, and the symbolic shifts entailed in the process. Researchers in organisation studies have drawn on Lacan's theory of the mirror phase to theorising this self-other dynamic (cf. Arnaud, 2002, 2012, Driver, 2010, 2013, Jones and Spicer, 2005, Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015, Vidaillet and Vignon, 2010, Harding, 2007, Roberts, 2005, Arnaud and Vidaillet, 2017). This subsection, therefore, inevitably begins with Roberts'(2005) analysis of the mirror phase and its implications for the self-other relationships.

Roberts (2005) presents a rich theoretical discussion on the fundamental nature of the subject's relationship with others and how the need for recognition informs the concepts of power and control in relationships through an analysis of the theory of the mirror stage. The researcher suggests that being confronted with the gestalt of the mirror image has three pivotal implications for the subject. First, this experience is foundational

to the “fantasy of management” that is based on the perception of the self as a “source of autonomous control” (p. 630). In other words, the notion of oneself as autonomous and complete is an illusion that subjects an employee and further ensues the struggle to actualise it. Second, “the seeking and finding of myself in the eyes of the other” (p. 630) is underpinned by an affective investment in the relationship with others that furthers into the need to control what they see of the subject. Third, Roberts draws on Lacan’s concept of desire as the desire to be the object of other’s desire. This desire to be seen and recognised by the other, along with the assumptions of control, subjects the subject to this tacit mechanism of control and to the need for recognition.

Roberts’ interpretation of the mirror stage is significant in presenting the complex mechanisms of the subject’s interaction with the mirror image from the perspective of organisational control. Such finding oneself in the mirror of the other anchors the source of self-construction beyond the subject and presents the problematic nature of autonomy both from the control of others and the subject’s need to control the others (as will also be discussed next with reference to Arnaud (2002)). Devoid of the emancipatory undertone of autonomy, the subject is deemed to find meaning and hope in recognition of this otherness of self, presented in the mirror image (as is also suggested by Driver (2010; 2014; 2017)).

In extension of Roberts’ argument of the mirror as a lasting approach to how we *seek* and *find* ourselves, this thesis deconstructs the notions of *seeking* and *finding* towards examining the subjective mechanisms involved in the process. It explores whether the *finding* is equivalent to presenting the *self* to others through articulations and

if such *seeking* necessarily leads to *finding* in terms of gaining recognition from the other. In other words, this thesis intends to explore and analyse the possibilities of failure in articulating to others, symptomatised both by the lack of symbolic resources at the subject's disposal and by the non-recognition of the other.

Kenny (2012) illustrates how being subjected to the desire for Other's recognition manifests for the subjects from the perspective of subtle power in identifications. The researcher analyses how members of a not-for-profit organisation configure their desire to do good and serve the poor with the need to be acknowledged as worthy by a powerful donor. Therefore, these images of *self* are examined from the perspectives of seeking recognition and affective subjection directed towards being wanted by "Someone Big and Important" (p. 1176). The "affective subjection" (p. 1189) of the members' confines and defines their position by their desire to be needed by the Other (donor). Such an affect to be desired in desire is essentially social in nature, and it is this that allows the discourses of power purchase on the subject, thereby influencing the ways in which the members struggle for symbolic recognition from the donor, even at the expense of compromising their goals and principles.

The research is remarkable for portraying the continual becoming of the members in relation to a powerful Other by bringing to the fore the vulnerability of self and the ways in which a sense of self is formed and presented by responding to a desire for the Other. The astute analysis of this need to be wanted by the Other paves the path for a more extensive examination of the same in this thesis. This study expands on the theoretical contributions of the research Kenny (2012) in three ways. First, given the

scope of this study, it presents a variety of ways in which this desire for the Other – classified as the desire to *be* or *have* the Other – manifests and causes subjects to shift positions. Second, by drawing upon the theory of discourse, the author is able to examine the subversive powers of the Other and agency of the subjects by instating the master signifier as a point of reference, with the intent of enabling a more granular analysis of the situation. Finally, it seeks to examine the potential for emotional autonomy despite such affective subjection.

The subjection of the subject to her own desire for recognition from the other discussed above has another aspect. Arnaud (2002) presents the intricacies of the subject's relationship with others by looking at how the subject is inflicted by and subjected to the significations of others. He illustrates this by drawing on the example of a newcomer joining in the position held by a beloved colleague, who is instinctively positioned by others as a "usurper" (p. 697). More interestingly, the researcher presents another case of a Business Development Manager who has worked in the organisation from its very inception found herself unconsciously limited by her identification with having a "small clan," signifiers that were offered to her by her founder and ex-boss, whom she related to as "her chief" (p. 704). The researcher analyzes this identification from the perspective of the manager's desire for a (M)other in her ex-boss, to whom she continued to address her actions. This recognition of the Other in the subject's signification of a sense of self is pivotal to understanding the ways in which the former limits and enables the subject. This not only pertains to the limitations of language but

also to the restricted ways in which the subject identifies beyond her own symbolic clusters and thereby, signifies her sense of self.

The contributions of this research are many. First, by unpacking the unconscious aspects of the self-other relationships, Arnaud extends our understanding beyond the need to control to what the other sees of the subject, as posited by Roberts (2005). Second, he effectively illustrates the role played by the relational others, as a manifestation of the big Other, by restricting the subject's access to language through the imposition of their signifiers. Third, Arnaud suggests that for the subject to be able to break through the fantasy-induced "illusion of autonomy and mastery," she has to discover herself in the discourse of the Other (p. 707). This implies the subject's becoming aware of her desire stemming from and directed to the Other and being able to reflect on her desire. However, achieving this, as the researcher himself admits, is a challenge that few can overcome, and the failure of which results in slips and breakdowns at the level of the Symbolic (as is also illustrated by Hoedemaekers (2010) in the previous section). The author finds that presenting failures in the Symbolic as part of a subject's struggle to realise her place in the discourse of the Other, offers an alternate conception of these failures beyond the tendency to ascribe all failures to the all-pervading, masterful lack.

Lastly, Arnaud posits that this awareness of the subject cannot be brought about by herself and is produced as a result of her interaction with an analyst (Arnaud, 2002, p. 706). The author recognises the importance of the intervention of an analyst in this process. But privileging any ability of the subject to pursue emancipation in a

meaningful way to her position as an analyst and takes away the possibility of such emancipation from a subject in any other position – such as that of an employee. This also restricts the author from empirically exploring the ways in which emotional autonomy can be analysed and theorised in this thesis and in the many organisational settings that do not include the presence of an analyst. Moreover, taking such a stance also limits the possibility to examine the role of (non-analyst) others in enabling any awareness in the subject through their use of language (cf. Driver, 2014).

Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe (2003) examine the scope and ability of a subject to manoeuvre a sense of self in her relationship with others by drawing upon Hegel's master-slave dialectic¹³ in their study of professional burnout in intersubjective relations. The researchers posit – “By recognizing the other in a certain way...one also determines the position taken up by oneself...” (p. 324). What is intriguing and different about their perspective is that instead of looking at the otherness of self, they look at the mutuality of the dynamics by presenting how the characteristics the subjects assign to others determines who they are.

Hegel's master-slave dialectic is founded upon the recognition of the other as master or as the slave (Lacan, 2006, p. 98). By recognising the other as master, the subject accepts her position as a slave or vice versa, and it is only upon such acknowledgement that the subjects can continue to interact and function as their named selves (Clemens, 2014, Chiesa, 2014b). Taking this mutuality of recognition as the inception of intersubjectivity, in keeping with Lacan, the researchers delve into how this

¹³ Lacan was significantly influenced by the master-slave dialectic and it underpinned his theorisation of the master's discourse in his typology of discourse. This will be expounded in detail in the next chapter.

relation is dependent upon the images one constructs of the other (Clemens, 2014, p. 196). For instance, the master is always assumed by the slave to be exploiting her and living luxuriously. Therefore, the “slave’s impression of being wronged is based on the image he or she has of the master...” (Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003, p. 326). Consequently, feelings of aggression or frustration the slave experiences position and shape her. Hence, it is only by assigning a different place to the other that it is possible for a subject to inhabit a different position.

Given the malleability of the self-other dynamic, the researchers set out to examine whether the subjects identify with others based on the above-mentioned imaginary constructions or “establish their relation in their own way” in the form of a symbolic reaction¹⁴ (p. 328). The researchers find that both of these phenomena overlap in their empirical analysis, and they find three ways of existing in relation to this implicit power of the other. One is an imaginary identification based on an illusory “tension” with the master/slave (p. 330). The second is an imaginary identification founded on addressing what they imagine the other to want of them or of fulfilling the lack in them. And the third is finding emancipation in increased awareness and knowledge (as also proposed by Arnaud (2002), Roberts (2005), and Driver (2009b, 2017a)). The researchers also find that the experience of burnout is significantly lower in those who are capable of symbolically recognising “how people relate to each other and are sensitive to how various positions are assumed” by reflecting “strategically on

¹⁴ This forming of new symbolic relationships by the subject can be likened to the subject’s producing her own master signifier in the discourse of an analyst, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

interrelations” in the inevitably intersubjective existence (p. 333), which could potentially pave the way for symbolically redefining these primordial positions.

The research as described above is significant for bringing to the fore how the subject acts upon others in the process of acting upon oneself. Such enactment of others is pivotal to the affective involvement of subjects that underlies the way they perceive and subsequently act (Armstrong, 2005). The author finds the potential of examining such intersubjectivity more critically in the context of Lacan’s typology of discourse by approaching the master signifier as an anchor for the subject’s movement across social relations, with respect to these very aspects of knowledge and desire for the Other. Furthermore, beyond the struggles of subjectivity through “symbolic redefinition” (Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003, p. 327) the researchers explore and examine the avenue for a form of liberation (from burnout), which is helpful for the purposes of examining what any form of autonomy may entail for the Lacanian subject¹⁵. However, like Arnaud (2002), Vanheule, Lievrouw, and Verhaeghe too propose the need for intervention in enabling this awareness in the employees. Therefore, how the realisation of intersubjective-ness is or can be enabled in the subject remains undefined. But they do emphasise on the imperative need of an other for this realisation to manifest.

Ekman (2013) proposed a different concept of “mirroring” towards enabling an understanding of intersubjectivity and the ways in which a subject is impelled by the desire to be named and recognised by the other. In keeping with the conception of local organisational discourses constructing an idealised image for the subject to live up to (cf.

¹⁵ This aspect is further developed in Chapter 5 with reference to the concept of *otherness*.

Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010), Ekman looks at the fantasy of limitless potential created by HRM practices and by the management. Fantasies, as a function of “desire, identification and hunger for validation” (Ekman, 2013, p. 1163), make the subjects susceptible to the domination that they seek to challenge in relationships of power. The researcher finds that the fantasy of the job is something larger than work that is impeded by mundane, routine assignments for the participants. And it is this fantasy that they mirror onto themselves and to their managers/subordinates. As a result, in Ekman’s approach, the mirror serves as a mechanism for enabling recognition and motivation and positions the subjects in the frame of a mutually developmental relationship.

Ekman does not explicitly draw on the theory of the mirror stage, despite the parallels between the theory and the concept of mirroring and the reference to gestalt in her conception of work. Instead, it is only obliquely referred to as the “split in early childhood when it recognises its own separate individuality” (p. 1163). Delving into the theory and the gestalt of the image, the author suggests, would have enabled the researcher to approach the dynamics of lack embedded in the fantasies with more subtlety and beyond the treatment of it as an absence, thereby allowing a different look at the disappointment that is inherent in the fantasies of potential and work as fulfilling. Regardless of these aspects, Ekman’s research is significant in advancing an empirical exploration of recognition and power in both how a subject is formed and how she relates and responds to others.

In a recent publication, Driver (2021) examines how subjects are positioned in relation to the organisational Other through significations of care in the organisation.

The research looks at the impact the surfacing of care in organisations informs the participants' fantasised perceptions of the organisations, which further underlies what they owe the Other by doing more for it through their work. There are certain similarities in the conceptual approach adopted by this thesis and that taken by Driver (2021) in the said research. First, Driver approaches care as an aspect that is mirrored to the participant by her O/others (Driver, 2021, p. 6). In a similar way, this thesis too examines the sense of self mirrored upon the participants of this study by the master signifier of Agile, as will be discussed in subsection 4.2.1.

Second, Driver too deals with the aspect of fragmented *selves* by segmenting the self into Imaginary and Symbolic (Driver, 2021, p. 4). As has been discussed, this thesis also recognises the vital importance of analysing the fragmentation of *selves* as being crucial to examining how the participants pursue their desire to be a certain *self* and cope with the lack of their being. However, this thesis takes the approach of conceptualising the fragmented *selves* beyond their roots in the Symbolic or Imaginary by looking into the fragmentation that happens at the dint of the Other at large. Such an approach to the split *self* looks at the interplay between the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary by looking at the excess of self that is not captured by the Other, the *self* subjected by the Other and the *self* pursued by the subject (This aspect is dealt with in detail with reference to the theory of alienation in section 5.2).

Third, Driver approaches the formation of identity through care in two ways. One, care becomes a means to addressing the needs of others towards the end of symbolising a sense of self (Driver, 2021, p.13). Two, for the recipients of such care, it

inspires a subjection to the imagined Other and impels them to do and be more for it (Driver, 2021, p. 10). In this thesis, the author too finds the importance of serving O/others and explores the possibility of serving the needs of both the organisational and relational O/others in tandem.

3.3.3. *Section summary*

This section begins by enhancing the understanding of subjectivity by presenting insights into how the subject is continually responding to signifier(s) of O/others (Arnaud, 2002, Harding, 2007, Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010) while coping with lack (Hoedemaekers, 2010) with the desire to overcome it (Driver, 2017a). And emancipation in this lacking and intersubjective existence is found in recognition of the impossibility of a stable self and in helping others (Driver, 2005, Driver, 2009b). Subsection 3.3.2 enables this thesis with the theoretical resources for an examination of *seeking* and *finding* a subject through the imaginary constructions in the mirror of the other (Roberts, 2005, Kenny, 2012), or through the fantasy induced mirroring (as suggested by Ekman, 2013) that causes a simultaneous shift in the position of the subject in relation to that of the O/others (Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003, Driver, 2021). But these studies do not sufficiently meet the theoretical demands of this thesis.

The author posits that for a comprehensive theorisation of intersubjectivity, research must account for not only her many sense of *selves* but also the sense of self projected onto her by the desiring others. As an extension of the same aspect, these do not account for the possibility of the subject's non-semblance with the image projected onto her and how this coping of lack manifests at the intersubjective level as well. Also,

what remains less examined is how the Lacanian subject struggles for a sense of distinction and autonomy from the other (despite the impossibility of attaining it) and how that endeavour might then shape such intersubjectivity. Moreover, the author suggests an exploration of the theory of the mirror phase as a subjective mechanism that also examines a continual interplay between the specular and perceived *selves* of the subject towards capturing the problematics of identification and transformation and leads to a nuanced exploration of how the striving for autonomy might arise from this fragmented being.

3.4 Towards re-thinking emotional autonomy

Conceptualising emotional autonomy from a Lacanian perspective adds layers to the understanding of the concept and also makes it more granular. First, devoid of the implication of unilateral finality suggested in the Emotional Autonomy Scale, the pursuit for emotional autonomy becomes reiterative and fraught with lack manifesting in failure and struggle (Hoedemaekers, 2010, Driver, 2009b). Second, the inclusion of fantasy into the conceptual frame results in the fragmentation of *self*, thus surfacing the complexities inherent in the very notion of the subject's sense of self. With this view, it is important to emphasise the mechanisms of subjectivity that this thesis considers to be fundamental to all examinations -

~ From the perspective of the research issues that this thesis sets out to examine, this review of Lacan's theories and its application in literature helps in bringing to the fore the need for semblance in everything that the subject does (Hoedemaekers, 2010).

- ~ By way of bringing the subject into its own symbolic order, the organisation becomes an Other for the subject as an employee, who then strives to be desired by it (Arnaud, 2002, Harding, 2007, Kenny, 2012, Driver, 2021). This relationship of the self with the Other subsumes all endeavours of the subject and is, therefore, pivotal to understanding how the subject sees herself in the unfolding process of change that charts the way between her and the organisational Other.
- ~ Similarly, the relational others function as manifestations of the big Other (Arnaud, 2002, Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003) through their role in impacting the subject's use of signifiers by either limiting or enabling access to certain signifiers. Therefore, the small other is embedded in the big Other.

Another significant contribution of this chapter has been to dissect the term autonomy. The presence of lack of the Real makes any sense of sustained, emancipatory autonomy impossible. With the absence of absoluteness, the author finds two different connotations of autonomy from a Lacanian perspective. First is the pursuit of autonomy in the Imaginary, whereby the subject is lured by and pursues a fantasy of an emotionally autonomous *self* who can articulate herself to others (Roberts, 2005). The second connotation is that of the pursuit of autonomy in the Symbolic, which manifests in the form of awareness and knowledge (Arnaud, 2002, Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003). The subject's awareness of the inevitability of lack and her subjection

to the desire for the O/other paves the way for a transformation in how the subject acts and articulates herself.

It is important to emphasise that the fantasy of an Imaginary autonomous *self* does in no way belittle the significance of the same. As Lacan himself postulated that “...any temptation to reduce fantasy to imagination, that doesn't admit to its failure, is a permanent misconception....(fantasy) is defined as an image set to work in the signifying structure...in its fundamental use, fantasy is the means by which the subject maintains himself at the level of his vanishing desire...” (Lacan, 2006, p. 532). Therefore, it is by way of pursuing her fantasised image of an emotionally autonomous *self* at the level of the Symbolic – which is interrupted by repeated failure – that the opportunity for the subject to recognise the truth about herself is created in the first place (Driver, 2009b, 2013, Driver, 2014). So, any attempts by the subject to pursue a position in language from which she can articulate her sense of self to others is pivotal to the context of this study. The impact this articulation has on others and whether it triggers reciprocation, identification, or failure in signification will help the author analyse the symbolic struggle for emotional autonomy.

In conclusion, the author posits that this interplay of desire, lack, and fantasy underlies the subject's traversal across the Imaginary and the Symbolic order in search of their place in the discourse of the Other. How this pursuit for Imaginary emotional autonomy manifests in the Symbolic through the subject's intersubjective position in the Other will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

3.5 Chapter summary

The chapter begins with an exploration of how the Lacanian subject is formed in the domains of the Symbolic and the Imaginary through an interplay of lack (of the Real), desire and fantasy. This discussion is crucial for the subject's complex relationship with signifiers and for the implications of the theory of the mirror phase that underlie the subject's relationships with signifiers and O/others.

The chapter delves into the review of Lacanian literature in organisation studies to examine how the literature extends our understanding of the intersubjective subject. The first part of the review focuses on the dynamic relationship of the subject with signifiers that are both shadowed by the Other and fraught with lack. Significant to the discussion in section 3.3.1 is the introduction of the concept of lack to emotional autonomy and the surfacing of the imbricated nature of the subject and the O/others relationships. This aspect is further developed in the next section that examines the dependence of the subject on others for recognition and the potential in relationships to mirror a sense of self onto others. Next, the chapter mobilises the analysis of concepts and review of the literature towards re-thinking emotional autonomy with a particular focus on what autonomy may mean from a Lacanian perspective.

The Lacanian theories of subjectivity and their application in the literature presented in this chapter leave three pivotal aspects that are crucial to this study unaddressed. First, there is an insufficient appreciation for the subtle and intricate mechanisms of the fragmented *selves*, which does not answer the questions of how the subject copes with these *selves* in her striving for a distinct sense of self. Second, the

literature does not account for the possibility of non-semblance with the image that is mirrored to her by the O/others and the struggles in identification and signification that may cause. Third, even though the chapter outlines the nature of autonomy from a Lacanian perspective, it does not offer much insight into how the subject can attain the knowledge of the otherness of her being towards being liberated. The author intends to delve into the complexities of these two aspects in Chapter 5 by drawing upon the theories of alienation and separation, which offer a process of how the subject traverses across her fragmented *selves* in her pursuit of the desire for an emancipated *self*. But before going into that discussion, it is important to examine the role of knowledge and the impact it has on the subject's relationship with the O/others in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4 | ARTICULATIONS OF THE INTERSUBJECTIVE SUBJECT IN DISCOURSE

4.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter examines *how* the subjects pursue a sense of emotional autonomy by navigating the intersubjective aspect of her being through her social relations, which are embedded in discourse, towards being emotionally autonomous. The previous chapter discussed the social aspect to the dialectic of lack and desire that is veiled in the image projected onto the subject by O/others (Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010, Hoedemaekers, 2010, Harding, 2007, Ekman, 2013, Driver, 2021). In addition, there is also the aspect of the subject's imagined *self* responding to these varied images and the possibility of her failure to become that *self* (Arnaud, 2002, Roberts, 2005, Kenny, 2012). This struggle for transformation is indispensably embedded in language and is related to the subject's efforts at articulating what she wants, who she is and how she wants to present herself to others in language through signification (Lacan, 2006, p. 744, Lacan, 2007a, p. 13). This chapter explains why Lacan's theory of discourse provides the apt conceptual resources for mobilising all the above-mentioned aspects of the subject's relationship with others and the organisation Other towards her articulation of *self*.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section (4.2) presents to the readers a critical overview of Lacan's theory of discourse by focusing on its components (4.2.1) and typology (4.2.2), which configures the mechanism by which participants traverse across relations based upon the role and impact of these relationships. The second section (4.3) examines the application of these theories in the literature on

organisation studies and reviews its contribution to theory. The chapter is then concluded with a chapter summary in section 4.4.

4.2 Discourse as social relations

The “fundamental relation” of one signifier to another, as posited by Lacan (2007a), lies in “representing the subject with respect to another signifier” (p. 13). In these fundamental relations of signifiers, something “larger” and “much further” than utterances go on, which we come to understand in the form of discourse that gives structure to these relationships (Lacan, 2007a, p. 13). This essay into the social aspect of subjectivity, therefore, positions the subject in relation to others, in a way that enables her to speak unto them based on the foundational mechanism of needing to be recognised by the other as herself (as explained in the theory of the mirror phase). Also involved in this something “larger” and “much further” in utterances are the aspects of knowledge and desire that make the subject assume these positions by responding to other’s signification or through their (successful or failed) attempts to signify to them. Therefore, on one end, Lacan’s theory of discourse offers a typology of the various functions that shape social relations – namely educating (university), commanding (master), revolting (hysteric) and transforming (analyst). On the other end, it also captures the continual unsettling of the subject in the process of responding to signification or attempting to signify (Bracher, 1993).

While the typology of discursive relationships is pivotal to understanding the social self of the subject, it is by no means a comprehensive framework of the positions

that a subject assumes in articulating her desire and knowledge (Fink, 1995, p. 145)¹⁶. This thesis, therefore, intends to examine the inter-discursive spaces between these classified relations and, thus, build on the understanding of how a subject articulates to others. With the objective to expound on the intricacies of articulation, the chapter first proceeds into a discussion of the components of discourse, which is then followed by an analysis of the typology in the following subsections.

4.2.1 The components of discourse

Discourse, as Lacan insists, does not exist without language; instead, it emerges at the point where the subject assigns meaning(s) to a particular event through a system of signifiers in the form of knowledge (S_2) (1968, 2007a). In keeping with this principle, the analysis of this theory of discourse is meant to answer the questions of who the subject of the discourse is, what impels her to shift in position to others, and finally, what enables these shifts and how. These questions are answered here with reference to the components of discourse, and it begins inevitably with the effect of language on the subject.

a. The barred subject (\$)

Lacan's theory of discourse begins with positioning the subject as essentially barred (denoted by $\$$) from her 'real' sense of self beyond language that remains unknown to the subject (Lacan, 2006, Lacan, 2007a). The subject is, therefore, split and perpetually distanced from her true sense of self, which she struggles to find and

¹⁶ This open-endedness of the discourse typology is also illustrated by Lacan's (2007) introduction of the discourse of the capitalist, which was a contextualization of the master's discourse in the contemporary socio-political climate.

comprehend in the Symbolic. The barred subject, therefore, not only represents the subject's split across the three foundational orders of the psyche but also the consequent fragmentation at the dint of signifiers as a speaking being. Fink (1995) explains this as when the subject has spoken "his or her piece what he or she has said usurps his or her place; the signifier replaces him or her, he or she...vanishes "beneath" or "behind" the signifier..." (p. 41). With the signifier now positioned in place of the subject, the subject becomes no more than a "*breach in discourse*" (Fink, 1995, p. 41 emphasis in original). This "*breach in discourse*" is significant here for it is the condition of being barred from the Real that urges the subject to "win attention and recognition from the Other" through repeated presentation of self through signifiers (Fink, 1995, p. 73). This brings to the fore the significance of the subversive master signifier in representing the subject by endowing upon her a sense of self.

b. Master signifier (S₁)

The privileged position of a master signifier (S₁) in discourse is a consequence of a masterful articulation of knowledge. It emerges through a subject's identification with it as a source of meaning that makes knowledge (S₂) intelligible to her (Lacan, 2007a, p. 13). For example, it is only through and for the master signifier of "God" that other related secondary signifiers – that function as a "synonym, attribute, or even associate of the master signifier" – form a religious discourse (Bracher, 1993, p. 112; p. 27, Fink, 1995). More importantly, it is the unsettledness of the signifiers like "God" that forms the hallmark of the way the master signifier functions. Like all signifiers, it is devoid of a definite, singular signification, and yet it structures a discourse and defines the subject

either in identification or dis-identification with it. By implication, then, the subject's advent in discourse is enabled by the intervention of the master signifier that impels her into being (Lacan, 2007a, p. 13).

The author finds parallels between the subject's signification of self through the master signifier and the mirroring effect that impels the subject to become the image that the mirror upholds to the subjects (as discussed in subsection 3.2.2 with reference to the theory of the mirror phase, cf. Lacan, 1991i, 2006). As a result, what ensues is a struggle to recognise the *self as that* through identification or dis-identification and to signify it to others (as can be evidenced from the research of Roberts (2005), Harding (2007), Kenny (2012), Driver (2021) discussed in section 3.3).

As the mirror phase is inclusive of the presence of the (m)other, the discursive plane too is inclusive of the presence of various others that shape the subject's signification and yield their power of recognition to legitimise the subject's actions (Lacan, 1991f, p. 140). Therefore, in this thesis, the author approaches the subject's relationship with the master signifier from the perspective of the mirror phase. The author suggests that this will enable a more granular and critical analysis of how the master signifier corresponds with the subject's sense of self, in what ways she then strives to transform herself in accordance with its dictates and the role played by the desires of the various O/others. For instance, a subject who subscribes to the prescriptions of the master signifier will act in accordance with it and will seek to translate her sense of self in its language through secondary identification (Bracher, 1993, p. 25). On the other hand, a subject who fails to identify with the master signifier

will seek to differentiate herself from the dictates of the master signifier. Lacan develops on this need by positioning it in terms of the subject's wanting to be a certain *self*, which subsumes and defines the semblance sought by the subject through the term object *a*.

c. The object a

The object *a* denotes the cause rather than the object of desire that escapes signification and is thus, the residual knowledge that the subject strives to have articulated (Lacan, 2007a, p. 30). It is an aspect of the subject that is excluded in the cyclical reproductions of a master signifier, and thus, it represents the subject's *want-to-be self* for the Other (Lacan, 2007b, pp. 42 - 43). Parker (2005) explains the object *a* as the “‘cause’ around which a (subject) circles...equivalent to gravity in the field of discourse”, such that it helps explain the “orientation of a speaker” (pp. 172-173). With reference to the example of the Contractor-Software Developer presented in the previous two chapters, the object *a* corresponds to the knowledgeable aspect of the employee's *self* as a Software Developer that is excluded in her *contractor-self*, which serves the demands of the master – the client organisation. In this thesis, the author finds that the incongruity between the master signifier and object *a* results in the subject's inability to articulate completely and effectively what she wants to the other, as will be discussed with reference to the findings in chapter 8 and discussions in chapter 9.

d. Knowledge

The master signifier, when approached with the impetus of object *a*, enables the barred subject to shift in the symbolic domain of the knowledge through attempts at signification of themselves (Lacan, 2007b, pp. 47 - 48). Knowledge here is classified

into two forms – the systematic aspect of formalized knowledge and the instinctual know-how termed as “savoir-faire” (Verhaeghe, 1995, p. 21, emphasis removed, Lacan, 2007a).

The role of knowledge depends on the type of discourse – for instance, in the university discourse, it serves the purpose of legitimising the master signifier, and in others, it is subjugated to the master signifier (Lacan, 2007c-b, p. 29). Its primary function then is to enable the subject to articulate through signifiers and draw links with other signifiers¹⁷ (Lacan, 2007b, p. 48). In discourse, Lacan states that savoir-faire/intuitive knowledge of the subject transforms or seeks to transform itself to the “master’s knowledge” by “putting oneself in the right position” that has the effect of commanding and making sense of the symbolic world for others through the master signifier (2007a, p. 22).

The fundamental mechanism of discourse is based on the subject’s responding to the symbolic lack of self in the master signifier – through negotiations of her barred self and the object *a* – and striving to fulfil it through mobilisation of knowledge (Lacan, 2007b, p. 48). Such a perspective to discourse as social relations paves the way for examining *how* the subject strives for an emotionally autonomous position in relation to others. Therefore, in the presentation of the discourse typology in the next subsection, the author draws attention to these different ways of articulating and situating the subject in relation to the master signifier (as will also be elucidated by Sköld (2010) and Kosmala (2012), in section 4.2).

¹⁷ The conceptualization of knowledge as savoir faire parallels with McBride’s (1990) concepts of self-knowledge and mastery presented in subsection 2.2.3.

Before proceeding to the typology, it is important to emphasise that the existent conceptualisation of knowledge in discourse does not account for the knowledge of *otherness*. Such knowledge (as discussed with reference to Arnaud (2002), Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe (2003), Driver (2017) in section 3.3) enables the subject to realise the impossibility of emulating the wholeness of the Other, of being separate from the relations others and thus, accept her otherness of self. This is perhaps because the possibility of re-inventing the social order by symbolically re-defining and thus, gaining a more liberated position in relation to the master signifier is not conceived of as a possibility in discourse and is only partially addressed in the analyst's discourse (Verhaeghe, 1995) (as will be discussed in section 4.3). The author posits that it is important to consider the theoretical implications of how the knowledge of otherness can be attained and articulated in discourse towards examining the pursuit of the desire for emotional autonomy. This is accomplished in the next chapter by integrating the knowledge of otherness with the theory of separation in subsection 5.2.2.

4.2.2 The typology of discourse

The typology of discourse – comprising of the university, master, analyst and hysteric – “unite a group of subjects through a particular impossibility of a particular desire” to articulate a complete sense of self for the subject (Verhaeghe, 1995, p. 6). Therefore, in presenting each of these discourses, the author's intent is to focus on how it shapes the subject, defines her agency and ability to articulate to others.

a. The university discourse

The university discourse creates the grounds for subjectivity to unravel at the level of discourse (Lacan, 2007a, p. 15). As the name suggests, in this discourse, the desiring subject (object *a*) finds herself face to face with a whole body of systematised knowledge (S_2) driven by the desire to know the totality of the Other (Bracher, 1993, p. 55, Lacan, 2007f, pp. 104 - 105). What emerges as a result of this encounter is the barred subject (\$) that remains uncaptured and unrecognised in the oeuvre of knowledge offered by the university (Bracher, 1994, p. 115). The subject, who is brought into the discourse of the university with the exclusion of her *a*, then shifts in discourse to have her barred *self* recognised.

The university discourse is constituted by the dominance of knowledge (S_2) from which all signifiers, including the master signifier (S_1), emerge. Therefore, the subject in this discourse, when faced with the totality of knowledge, strives to be recognised by the university and to be subjected to its knowledge (Lacan, 2007c-a, p. 29). This is well exemplified by the subject's involuntary introduction into language. The rules of grammar and the norms are imposed upon her, and she is given the linguistic aid to identify herself with and is thus, denied access to that which lies beyond language. In this way, the subject is formed and excluded at the same time (Bracher, 1993, p. 56). In other words, the university positions all subjects in her discourse and gives them the linguistic resources to identify with and signify by impelling a fragmented version of their being.

Significant here is the role of knowledge for its purchase on the subject's the desire to know, which then mutes any questions as to the legitimacy and relevance of the function of the master signifier (Bracher, 1993, p. 58). The knowledge by way of corresponding to the subject's object *a* orientates her desire but does not necessarily direct it towards fulfilment. The hegemonic discourse of the master, instated by the dominance of the master signifier, hence appears as a logical consequence in making sense of this powerful and immense system of knowledge (Lacan, 2007a, p. 20).

b. The master's discourse

The discourse of the master is said to be a precursor to the discourse of the university, in that it creates a whole system of knowledge around its master signifier (Lacan, 2007a, p. 13, Lacan, 2007c-b, p. 30) and is legitimised by the discourse of the university (Lacan, 2007a, p. 20). With the intent of guiding the subject through the overwhelming body of knowledge, the master orders the signifiers with the effect of instating the master signifier and promoting her interpretation of knowledge over others (Lacan, 2007c-b, p. 30). For the subjects, this has the effect of formatting them alike in keeping with the dictates of the master signifier and offers them common symbolic resources to communicate with one another (Bracher, 1993, p. 60).

The commanding function of the master signifier has many layers to it. First, as mentioned earlier, the master signifier orders knowledge in a way that it lends meaning to a whole realm of signifiers that were previously disjointed. By such ordering of signifiers (of knowledge), the master signifier gives a sense of "identity and direction" to the subjects, who invest themselves in it through either identification or dis-

identification with it (Bracher, 1993, p. 25). In a way, the master signifier offers a medium by which the subject can align herself with the Other and thus, enables the discourse to have a purchase on the subject (Bracher, 1993, p. 26). Therefore, the master commands and impels the subject to a particular position towards configuring a relationship between the self and O/others through the master signifier (Lacan, 2007e, p. 93).

The author would like to draw attention to three aspects of the master's discourse that she finds are crucial to understanding the interrelationship between the master signifier and subjectivity. First, the impression of totality that the master signifier offers intends to suppress the object *a* by regulating her fantasy and thus, forcing her to define herself only in relation to the master signifier. Bracher (1993, p. 162) explains this by aligning the replacement of an existing master signifier with a new signifier with the alteration of their *imagined* ideal self. For most subjects, this necessity to re-create an ideal self is so threatening that it results in them re-instating the existing or old master signifiers. Even though the drive of the object *a* has the ability to reverse the order, as will be seen in the remaining discourses of the hysteric and analyst, the subjection to the master signifier leads to either the struggle for liberation from it or to the submission to its authority, according to this classification. But it does not account for possibilities of resentment or disavowal during subjection to it. In this study, the author has found evidence of such possibilities and examines those in the discussions in Chapter 9.

Second, for the master as an agent, the illusion is complete. The master so completely identifies herself with the master signifier that she confuses herself to be a

complete, all-knowing being (Fink, 1995, p. 131, Lacan, 2007c-b, p. 32). This ignorance of the divided self suppresses both – the desire of the other but also her own object *a* (Verhaeghe, 1995, p. 9). Given this, Lacan theorizes that the inevitable outcome of the master’s position is to be symbolically castrated¹⁸ by disabling her from the pursuit of desire to be complete, thereby creating the void for a different master signifier (Lacan, 2007d, pp. 128 - 129).

Finally, and more crucially, there is the aspect of understanding why the master is eventually castrated and the ways in which this discourse paves ways to its own defeat by creating grounds for the hysteric’s and the analyst’s discourse. The answer to these questions lies in the dialectic of the master-slave that underlies discourse.¹⁹ The master signifier functions here as the master (by defining the symbolic agency of the master herself), and the slave is symbolized by knowledge. In the process of being enslaved to the master, the slave “learns something” through identifications and significations of subjects trying to make sense of the master signifier (Fink, 1995, p. 131). This appropriation of knowledge by the subjects results in an excess (object *a*) that escapes the master signifier. But the master, disabled by her symbolic castration, “is unconcerned with knowledge; as long as everything works, as long as his or her power is maintained or grows” (Fink, 1995, p. 131). Nonetheless, the master’s identity is dependent on the subjection of others as slaves. As the slave labours, she creates a

¹⁸ Symbolic castration refers to the loss of the idea of a “subject’s completeness” such that it excludes all possibility of stimulating desire or deriving fulfilment from it (Lacan, 2006, p. 192).

¹⁹ Lacan’s understanding of intersubjectivity was significantly influenced by Hegel’s theorisation of the master-slave dialectic (Thompson, 2005). For instance, his formulation of desire as a desire to be recognised by the (O)ther and similarly the subjects (represented by signifiers) existing in relation to others and indicative of this influence.

surplus (object *a* that is not represented by the master signifier) that eventually finds the power to overthrow the master by overcoming the tyrannical ignorance of the master signifier. This can be seen in relation to an employee who is at the front end of implementing a change and whose knowledge supersedes that of the management through her understanding of the job and how the change might impact outputs. It is this surplus of knowledge that empowers the subject to assume a different discursive position by way of articulating what she knows in relation to the master's knowledge – the master signifier – in the hysteric's and the analyst's discourse (Lacan, 2007a).

c. The hysteric's discourse

In this dramatically titled discourse of the hysteric, the barred subject who recognises that she is removed from her Real self by accession into language refuses to embody the master signifier. Enslaved by the master, the subject comes to confront the lack in the master signifier by way of gaining knowledge. Lacan (2007e) describes such a hysteric subject as someone who “in her own way, goes on a kind of strike” but “...does not give up her knowledge” (p. 94). Instead, she “unmask(s) the master's function” of tyrannically excluding herself; despite remaining “united” with it (Lacan, 2007e, p. 94).

Detaching from the master by giving up one's own knowledge through the articulation of a signifier is challenging. This is given the imperativeness of the master signifier's need to command others by making itself recognisable to all (Bracher, 1993, p. 26). Therefore, “in addressing the master, the hysteric demands that he or she produce knowledge and then goes on to disprove his or her theories”, instead of wanting to

overthrow the master signifier by instating her own (Fink, 1995, p. 134). It is for this reason that the receivers of the hysteric's message are "alienated by being summoned to produce master signifiers and knowledge in response to the other's division (\$) rather than in response to their own want-of-being (*a*)" (Bracher, 1993, p. 68). But despite the shortcomings of the hysteric, this discourse is significant for creating the possibility for reclaiming "what has been repressed and thereby institute a new...social structure" (Bracher, 1993, p. 65). It subverts the power of the master's discourse by refusing to be defined by it, by seeking to interject into the structure the failure of totalization, which then culminates in the hysteric no longer being a slave to the master (Lacan, 2007e, pp. 93 - 94). As a result, the hysteric's relationship with the master signifier is centred upon the impossibility of demand (Verhaeghe, 1995, p. 11), which results in the contradiction of the hysteric's refusing to embody the master signifier while being subjected to it.

When analysed from the perspective of the mirroring properties of the master signifier, this translates into the hysteric subject's inability to identify with the image projected upon her by the master signifier – an aspect that remains unexplored in literature with reference to both the mirror image and the master signifier, as can be seen from the analysis in sections 3.3 and 4.3. Underpinned in this tense relationship between the subject and the master signifier are the fragmented *selves* of the subject that seek to be reflected in the mirror and thus be recognised by others as the subject.

d. The analyst's discourse

In the discourse of the analyst, the need for a different master signifier and the need to have one's knowledge articulated coincides (Lacan, 2007f, pp. 106 - 107). This

is attained by the dominance of the object *a* that addresses the barred subject directly and in the process situates a master signifier that has not been “brought into relation with any other signifier” and thus, integrates it into the symbolic clusters by forming new signifying chains (Fink, 1995, p. 135). By placing the desire for an originary *self* in the forefront, the subject is impelled into a position of recognising and making sense of her desire in the discourse of analyst (Lacan, 2007f, p. 107). The master signifier in this position is made subservient and caters to this desire for self as the object of the Other’s desire. And it is thus, that the discourse of the analyst impels others to “recognize, acknowledge and deal with this excluded portion of being” (Bracher, 1993, p. 68). In doing so, the analyst’s position is significant in achieving any form of social change by transforming her knowledge (*savoir faire*) into the master signifier (Bracher, 1993, p. 68).

The analyst’s discourse, however, is not without its problems. Firstly, in subverting the master’s discourse through the dominance of her object *a* – the very aspect that the master suppressed, the analyst’s discourse at the apparent level leads to the inevitable collapse of all forms of domination. But the analyst’s discourse is not an exception to this ability to dominate others itself (Lacan, 2007f, p. 107). The inevitability of instating a new master signifier has the subsequent effect of subjecting the analyst and others to the dictates of a new powerful mandate. Alienated again by the master signifier, the subject is repeatedly faced with the impossibility of capturing a sense of self.

Verhaeghe (1995) posits that putting the excess of the subject's object *a* to the forefront annihilates the subject by "reducing him to the mere residue, even the trash beyond the signifiers" (p. 12). These aspects of the analyst's discourse problematise the transformative and even emancipatory impact it is suggested to have by being a precursor to a new social order by Bracher (1993, p. 69) and Costas and Taheri (2012, p. 1208)²⁰. The author finds incongruence in the way emancipation has been associated with the analyst's discourse, particularly given the position of knowledge. Lacan linked the possibility of emancipation to the knowledge of the true nature of its relationship with the Other (as will be discussed with reference to the theory of separation in the next chapter in subsection 5.2.2). However, in further alienating herself others to a new master signifier and subjugating the needs of relational others (Verhaeghe, 1995, Arnaud, 2002, Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003, Driver, 2009b), the analyst does not align with the knowledge of otherness that has been related to emancipation for a Lacanian subject (Verhaeghe, 2019). The author deals with this contradiction between the emancipatory promise of the analyst and its alienation to the master signifier in the next chapter by elaborating on the nature of knowledge and integrating it with the theory of separation.

The author finds that there are many tacit aspects to the analyst's discourse that need to be unpacked to fully appreciate the analyst's discourse and how it contributes to our understanding of the subject's articulation of a sense of self to others. For now, this

²⁰ This research will be discussed in detail in the next section, 4.3.

chapter will proceed into examining these four discursive positions and articulations of self in the discourse-based literature in organisation studies.

4.2.3 Section summary

The purpose of this section was to lay out the theoretical components of Lacan's theory of discourse and the ways in which the typology of discourses positions the subject in relation to knowledge and how that configures a relationship with the Other. The author contends that the four types of discourse relations do not comprehensively capture the various ways in which subjects approach the master signifier towards realising their desire for the Other. She points to the inter-discursive spaces that capture the subject's struggle to be a hysteric analyst or even a subject to the master's discourse and proposes an examination of the master signifier as a mirror that projects a sense of self on the subject. With this as the starting point, the next section reviews Lacan's discourse-based research in organisation studies.

4.3 The subject and the master signifier in organisation studies

The application of Lacan's theory of discourse in organisation studies is primarily focused on the role of the master signifier in shaping subjectivity. This has been approached by researchers from the perspectives of examining the integral importance of master signifier (Costas and Taheri, 2012, Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015) in the subject's articulating a sense of self (Kosmala, 2012) and of the ways in which subjects are impelled into signification by the master signifier (Sköld, 2010).

Kosmala (2012) examines the articulation of self to examine how employees signify themselves through the master signifier of competence. The study finds that the

underlying lack manifests variedly in changes in identifications and articulations, which in turn inhibit the fulfilment of the desire to be competent as the “discourse that supports a desired competence is changing” (p. 12). (In an organisational context, this is illustrated by the changing nature of the market, organisational strategy, or the demands of the clients/stakeholders/management.) Kosmala, therefore, expounds on the impossibility of signifying competence given the power of the empty signifier that always exceeds signification.

The research begins with the consideration of competence as an empty master signifier that structures employees’ desire for competence as they cope with the knowledge of their own competence. On the one hand, this emptiness necessitates an imaginary construction of a *competent self* that integrates their fragmented *selves* through signifiers of knowledge, ethics and personal skills. On the other, it also allows for a sense of empowerment to act upon the construction of themselves, as in the discourse of the analyst. The researcher, therefore, presents Lacan’s typology of discourse as an essay into finding a place for articulation “in relation to dynamics of empowerment” (p. 14) in varied attempts to reconcile the lack of with the desire for competence.

Kosmala (2012) does well in critically presenting the power of the empty master signifier and the ways in which the subjects inhabit different positions in attempts to articulate it in keeping with what they know of themselves and their desires. However, the potential of Lacan’s theory of discourse is only partially appreciated in approaching it as an individualistic struggle with the relational others cast as the discourse that keeps

changing in the background. Also, missing here is the role of others and their desires in this process (the interpellative powers of the other in shaping the subject's attempts at signification - as has been presented with reference to Arnaud (2002), Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe (2003), Harding (2005), Hoedemaekers (2010), Kenny (2012), Ekman (2013)). Therefore, the author proposes the need to bring into the analysis a more active interplay of the sociality of discourse towards fully appreciating the construction of a subject's sense of self in language, together with the recognition of the articulation by others.

Costas and Taheri (2012) examine the role of the leader and follower in terms of the discourse relations of the master and the analyst towards re-theorising authentic leadership. Like Kosmala (2012), the researchers tackle the same problem of empowerment and seek to answer if authentic leadership inspires dependency or enables "empowering and autonomous" follower-leader relations. In a critical and intriguing analysis of authentic leadership from a Lacanian perspective, Costas and Taheri first deconstruct the need for a master signifier that will in effect contradict the characteristic of enabling autonomy by instating a master signifier that orders their subjectivity. However, they suggest that the absence of such symbolic authority could transpire the followers to construct imaginary perceptions of completeness and unity such that it could obliterate the boundaries between the leader and the follower. However, instead of proposing the elimination of the master signifier as the key to emancipation, the researchers draw on postmodernist readings of Lacan by Zizek (2000) and Stavrakakis

(2008) and posit that abolition of master signifier will destabilise the objectives of authentic leadership by limiting the very possibility of emancipation or autonomy.

Costas and Taheri's research does well in illustrating the importance of a master signifier in any pursuit for autonomy, which occurs in the interstices of subjection to authority and freedom to desire. However, the researchers' treatment of the discourse of the analyst surfaces the problematics of the analyst's discourse for the purpose of re-conceptualising emotional autonomy in this thesis. Costas and Taheri (2012) begin with the understanding of the analyst's discourse as – providing “ways of formulating more emancipatory possibilities for subjects in relation to authority...the analyst undermines his/her position as *the* ultimate authority...This may open the space required for the emergence of a desire-creating lack and maintain the possibility of greater autonomy and self-determination for followers” (p. 1199, 1205 emphasis in original). In this context, the authentic leader as an analyst assumes the role of a relational-small other, as opposed to a masterful primal father. Devoid of the leader's symbolic authority, the subject's pursuit of desire is limited to the Imaginary and restricted from signification in the Symbolic. Such an approach to the analysts' discourse defines its promise of emancipation in terms of the subject's “freedom to desire”, not for the reason of desire bringing about revolutionary changes but for the sake of desiring itself (Lacan, 2006, p. 663, cf. Costas and Taheri, 2012, p. 1211).

The author, with the objective to re-conceptualise emotional autonomy and examine the research issues raised in this thesis, contends that the freedom to desire in the analyst's discourse does not enable the subject to articulate a sense of self to others

as the analyst's discourse falls into the same trap of the master's discourse, which is alienating the self to the master signifier. Furthermore, the analyst's discourse is particularly problematic in its inclusion of others for its essentially self-serving characteristic of the analyst in coping singularly with her own barred self and object *a*. Verhaeghe (1995) expands on this aspect of the analyst's discourse as following – "(t)he analytic discourse yields one subject, constructing and deconstructing itself through the process of analysis; the other party is nothing but a steppingstone" (p. 13). In keeping with this view, the author also finds the researchers' view of separation as a process of distancing oneself from the "fiction propagated by the master's discourse" (p. 1201) problematic. Separation for the Lacanian subject instead is strived for from the Other through the knowledge of its formative and tyrannical powers (Moati, 2014, Verhaeghe, 2019). Therefore, though the author agrees with Costas and Taheri's point of the indispensability of symbolic authority, she takes issue with the interpretation of the analysts' discourse as emancipatory and contends that any pursuit of emancipation or autonomy is underpinned by the freedom to desire, identify and signify.

Vidaillet and Gamot (2015) take this conversation forward by placing the imperativeness of subjection to a master signifier in the context of a subject's ability to desire, fantasise and identify. This examination is situated in the study of angst faced by workers whose factory was on the verge of shutting down, and their inability to know towards whom their anger should be directed limited their ability to resist or act. Also, in keeping with Costas and Taheri (2012), the researchers posit that being faced with the overwhelming totality of the unbarred Other, in the absence of a master signifier,

incapacitated the subjects by taking away their ability to identify or dis-identify with its symbolic authority. This “persecutory Other” negates any way of symbolically realizing what this radical alterity wants or even the consolation of resisting a symbolic dictate (Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015, p. 1001). The workers, therefore, reconstruct a symbolic point of authority by creating a place for enunciation aimed at the invisible source of discourse. Fantasy, as the “imaginary promise” of restoring what is lost in the Symbolic, is induced by “strong libidinal attachments” to the status quo (Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015, p. 992).

Stavrakakis (2008) too backs the importance of this source of utterance over the significance of the content of the message. This subjection to authority is underpinned by the innate assumption of the other knowing more than the self. And it is this that impedes the role of knowledge in the process of bringing about any subjective or intersubjective change by always pinning it “at the expense of others” (p. 1046). This leaves little room for autonomy and paradoxically re-instates the very structure of power that they resist. Despite this, Vidaillet and Gamot’s (2015) research has much to say about the nature and mechanisms of resistance, which is itself the very way for an autonomous response to the failure of the Symbolic and the seemingly all-powerful Other (p. 1006). The researchers find hope in crevices of this structural impossibility that prevents complete determination of the subject by the Other.

Vidaillet and Gamot (2015) bring to the fractured relationship between the Other and the subject the nuance of fantasising about a master signifier and the possibilities inherent in the impossibility of liberation and autonomy. The author draws on this

research to further expand on these potentials and bring to the fore the way this symbolic struggle manifests in relation to the absence of signification of a master signifier that governs the subjects' existence through the varied signifiatory attempts of the symbolic mandate in the findings of this thesis in Chapter 8.

While Vidaillet and Gamot (2015) present the imperativeness of the master signifier towards articulating any sense of self, Sköld (2010) examines the signification of this symbolic mandate as truth and knowledge as the subject traverses across the discursive plane to the position of an analyst (p. 372). Sköld examines the interplay between a customer's fantasy of a complete vehicle and the marketing fantasy of enjoyment. In doing so, he brings to the fore the discursive shifts of the consumer in the process of customising a truck manufactured by Scania that can be the "Complete Vehicle" (p. 373). This fantasy, propelled by Scania's marketing, is not confined to the truck alone; it manifests by finding a place in the discourses of the media (through a magazine, Trailer) and of desiring to become what the company lacks by suggesting changes not only to their product but also to their services. This discursive integration into the production process has a way of reigning in the fantasies of the said consumer by imposing coherence through signification of what is feasible. In the process of this, the subject oscillates between the position of a hysteric and an analyst – trying to make the fantasised marketing message for Scania (the truth of a symbolic mandate) manifest through his customisations, in the first position, and in seeking to signify the knowledge of what a "Complete Vehicle" is to Scania and Trailer, in the latter.

The research brilliantly presents the participant (consumer) in relation to the discourse of Scania, its marketing message, the sales contact and the Trailer; and traces the shifts, transience and indeterminacies of his positions in discourse. It is the influence of such sociality of existence that underpins the subject's "*imaginarizations*" of a perfect object (cf. Stavrakakis, 2008, p. 1054). The articulation of knowledge, therefore, is no less emancipatory than the struggle to actualise the fantasy of marketing. This brings to question the prospect of fulfilment for the consumer and how it might be made possible. The research explores the ephemerality of the analyst's discourse, which is based on aligning his supposed knowledge of what a Complete Vehicle should be with the desire to be recognised by Scania.

Sköld's treatment of the analyst discourse is inclusive of the interdeterminancies of the participant's being and the conflicting desires of the others (Scania and Trailer). By way of confronting Scania – as his object *a* – in the discourse of an analyst, the researcher describes the participant's positioning Scania and the sales contact as hysterics, who do not know what needs to be done. In doing so, the participants assume the responsibility of telling them what to do and how to make a Complete Vehicle. In differing from Costas and Taheri's (2012) approach to the analyst's discourse, Sköld brings into the scheme the complexities of other's and their desires that become a part of the signification process for the participant. And, the participant's struggle towards the discursive position of an analyst is inclusive of a change in the way the others (Scania, Trailer, sales contact or other buyers) are positioned. Therefore, as opposed to appearing as an emancipatory discursive position, the analyst's discourse appears as a struggle for

the legitimisation of his articulation of self through a master signifier, which is dependent upon its recognition by the others.

In a close alignment to Sköld's approach to discourse, the author defines the subject's articulation of a sense of self in the discursive plane as the subject's struggle to configure an alignment for her own desire for recognition based on her knowledge, with the desire of O/others mediated through the master signifier. (This mechanism is further elaborated upon in the conceptual framework in Chapter 5.) The author contends that a wider analysis of these struggles to articulate will enable an examination of inter-discursive spaces that cannot be classified as master, hysteric or analyst.

4.3.1 Section summary

In this section, the author presents the varied ways in which the master signifier shapes and impels the subject to signify a sense of self. Inevitably, the master signifier emerges as the locus of subjectivity in discourse that defines the subject's relationship with the Other and causes her to shift in relation to relational others through her significations. The review surfaces the intricacies of the hysterics and analyst's discourse and the integrality of the master signifier. The analysts' discourse is problematised by the imposition of the analyst's self-serving master signifier on others and by the imperative alienation to the dictates of the signifier. But the scope for resistance against this determination and towards autonomy is enabled by the lack in the Other that allows the subject to signify or seek significations from others. Thus, suggesting the need to conceptualise discursive positions that capture such resistant and

emancipatory approaches to the master signifier, thereby pointing to the interdiscursive spaces in the typology.

4.4. Chapter summary

This chapter presented a critical evaluation of *how* a subject can articulate a sense of self to others from the perspective of Lacan's theory of discourse. To this end, subsection 4.2.1 analyses the mechanisms of discourse through a discussion of its components and typology. Significant here is the examination of how the subject is positioned in relation to the tyrannical and totalising effects of the master signifier, which the author has compared to the subject's encounter with her idealised image in the mirror phase. This discussion is supplemented with a review of how Lacan's theory of discourse has been applied in organisation studies. The key aspects that emerge from this review are the indispensability of the master signifier to the pursuit of any form of autonomy, the transient nature of discursive positions and a critique of the analysts' discourse potential for emancipation.

Despite the contributions of this discussion, there are certain aspects that are left unaddressed by the theory and literature presented in this chapter. First, there is ambiguity in theory and literature about the nature of knowledge and how that knowledge can be mobilised towards any form of autonomy. Second, the possibility of emancipation through the analyst's discourse claimed in the literature is questionable (Verhaeghe, 1995). In keeping with Arnaud (2002) and Vanheule, Lievreuw and Verheaghe (2003), the author posits that any scope for the subject's autonomy is based upon her awareness of being embedded with her relational others and of the lack in the

Other. Third, in continuation of the previous point, this thesis seeks an alternate position in discourse that is inclusive of relational others and the Other for the conceptualisation of emotional autonomy. The following chapter delves into how such an alternate position can be theorised by drawing upon the theories of alienation and separation (Verhaeghe, 2019, Moati, 2014) and the nuances of the subject's desire for the Other (Bracher, 1993).

CHAPTER 5 | CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

5.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter addresses the aspects that were left unaddressed in chapters 3 and 4. To recap, those aspects pertain to – a) the need for critical insight into how the subject copes with her fragmented *selves* in her pursuit for a distinct sense of self, b) the need to examine the possibility of non-semblance with the *self* mirrored to the subject, and c) finally a close examination of the nature and mechanisms knowledge of otherness that leads the subject towards emancipation through discourse. These aspects are addressed in this chapter by drawing upon the Lacanian theories of alienation and separation (section 5.2). The author would like to mention that the purpose of these theories is not to replace the theories of the mirror phase and discourse. Instead, it is meant to supplement the symbolic absences in those theories for the purposes of building the conceptual framework for this study in (section 5.3) with reference to the three research issues identified in this thesis (section 5.4).

5.2 Alienation and separation

The objectives of this section are twofold. First, it addresses the question of how the subject copes with and traverses across her fragmented *selves* towards articulating a sense of self to others by drawing upon the theory of alienation. Second, it expounds on how the knowledge of otherness can transform the subject's relationship with O/others. The presentation of these Lacanian theories is largely based on the interpretations of the psychoanalyst Paul Verhaeghe (2019) and the philosopher Raoul Moati (2014). By thus,

theorizing these two principal tenets of the conceptual foundations, the author will then mobilise this discussion towards presenting a conceptual framework in section 5.3.

5.2.1 Alienation – traversing the fragmentation of the subject’s many selves

Lacan’s theory of alienation is based on the ‘*tension*’ that exists between the subject and the *self* that is mirrored to her (Moati, 2014, p. 154 emphasis in original). The subject’s alienation, therefore, is the outcome of the subject’s recognition of her *self* in the other (of a signifier or of a mirror image) (Lacan, 1991i, p. 49). However, there are facets to this alienation that deserve more elaboration in order to understand the nuances of how the subject is fragmented and how she traverses across her split being. These different fragments of the self are classified here as the subject’s *a*, the subject’s being (S₁) and her want-to-be *self* S₂ (Verhaeghe, 2019)²¹.

In meaning and usage, this *a* is the same as the object *a* of discourse. However, the other terminologies – S₁ and S₂ – overlap with the terminologies in the theory of discourse. Therefore, before proceeding further in this discussion, the table below encapsulates the difference and similarities between these concepts²².

Terminology	Lacan’s discourse theory	Verhaeghe’s interpretation of alienation
<i>a</i>	The excess of the subject that is unsymbolised and is the cause of desire	
S ₁	The master signifier	Subject-to-be in a state of first identification with the “primal signifier.” ²³
S ₂	Formalised knowledge	The subject inclusive of identification with added signifiers, besides the primal signifier
	Intuitive knowledge	

Table 1. Terminologies in theories of discourse and alienation

²¹ The author has drawn upon Verhaeghe’s (2019) interpretation of Lacan’s theory of alienation because of his bifurcation of alienation into two phases – primal alienation and alienation. This phased approach enables a more nuanced approach to alienation.

²² For clarity, the author will only use the symbols S₁ and S₂ in discussing Verhaeghe’s theory of alienation and will use the concepts “master signifier” and “knowledge” when discussing those in reference to discourse.

²³ The primal signifier refers to the subject’s mirror image that she encounters in the mirror phase.

a. *Primal alienation and alienation*

Verhaeghe (2019) begins his discussion of alienation with the subject's derivation of a sense of self from the images and signifiers made available to her by the Other, which

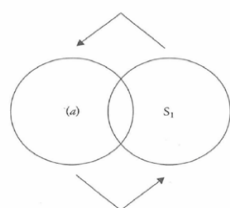


Figure 1. Primal Alienation

are implicit with the enigma of the latter's desires (p. 372). The researcher suggests that such acknowledgement of the Other's desire in serving the master signifier creates the symbolic possibility for the Other to respond to her object *a*. Verhaeghe depicts this process of initial identification and "primal alienation"

to the master signifier as it emerges in the field of the Other in Figure 1²⁴.

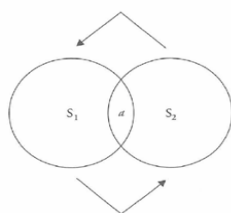


Figure 2. Alienation

In this figure, the top arrow represents "founding identification with the S_1 ", and the bottom arrow represents the subject's "appeal to the Other" for the recognition of her *a* (p. 373). This cyclical process is relentless as "*a* is never

completely answered for, resulting in the need for more and more signifiers...". As a result of these repeated appeals through signifiers, the "*a* is displaced to the external side of the subject-to-be" and eventually between the overlap of the two circles, as is represented in Figure 2²⁵ (p. 373)²⁶. In this figure, the subject-to-be is further divided in the extension of herself as S_2 through identification with multiple signifiers. The subject continues to be alienated in language by way of being divided

²⁴Source for Figure 1 - Verhaeghe (2019, p. 372)

²⁵ Source for Figure 2 - Verhaeghe (2019, p. 373)

²⁶ There is a difference between the representation of *a* in both figures 1 and 2. While, in figure 1, the subject faces the S_1 with the totality of *a*, parts of the latter are gradually pushed out as the subject transitions to S_1 . Therefore, it is only with a distilled version of her *a* that the subject arrives at the stage of alienation (in Figure 2). Though Verhaeghe (2019) represents the concept as (*a*) in figure 1 and *a* in figure 2, he does not explain the difference between the two representations in the research article.

over “several signifiers” and to the end of never being able to “coincide with itself, with the S_1 of the first mirror identity...as she appears and disappears from signifier to signifier” (pp. 373 - 374).

The analysis of signification from the theoretical lens of alienation primarily enables the examination of how participants cope with their fragmented *selves*. Secondly, it also facilitates a closer examination of the interplay of lack and desire in signification. At the end of subsection 3.3.1, the author had outlined the need to examine significations not only as being riveted by lack but also as being a response to lack. The theorisation of this approach lack and desire in significations is enabled by positioning significations as the participants’ appeal to the Other for the inclusion of their lacking *a* (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 373).

b. Alienation and identification

The author would like to comment on the conceptual similarities between Verhaeghe’s terminology of primal alienation and alienation and Lacan’s conceptualisation of primary and secondary identification, as previously presented in subsection 3.2.2. The similarities can be attributed to Lacan’s abandonment of the two forms of identifications for the dialectical processes of alienation and separation as the “analytic cure” in terms of the subject’s repositioning of her relationship with the Other (Moati, 2014, p. 155).

Though Lacan distanced himself from the two forms of identification, there is still value in examining these processes for the purposes of analysis itself, as will be demonstrated through the discussions of the research issues in Chapter 9. The author, in

particular, finds its application to be useful in relation to Verhaeghe's phased conceptualisation of alienation as it can explain how alienation happens and also why in certain cases, alienation is partially attained. Therefore, from this perspective, alienation emerges as an effect of identification, indicative of the transformation implicit in the process. More importantly, Verhaeghe's interpretation of alienation explains the transition of the subject from the Imaginary (in primal alienation) to the Symbolic (in alienation), something that the concepts of primary and secondary identification do not account for in Lacan's conceptualisation of the process.

5.2.2 Separation – knowledge of otherness

The discussion on alienation is based on the subject's failure in signifying her lacking *self – a* to the Other (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 373). In light of this lack, the question arises concerning the point of this alienation and the continual appealing to the Other with one's desire if it does not account for a fulfilling articulation of self for the subject. Lacan (1998d, p. 214) presents the dialectical process of separation (from the Other) as an answer to this question. Separation, positioned as *the* analytic cure for the analysand, is an emancipatory passage inclusive of the subject's recognition of her state and the role of the Other in the Symbolic, as opposed to her misrecognition in the Imaginary (Lacan, 1998d, p. 214).

Separation is underpinned by the alternatives of *being* and *thinking* of the subject. As has already been discussed, the arrival of the subject in language is underlined by a forced choice to be subjugated to the signifier and partake in the meaninglessness of signifiers and no less the master signifier (Lacan, 1998d, Lacan,

2006, Fink, 1995). This choosing to *be* is, therefore, a prerequisite to the subject's primal alienation whereby the subject comes to be fragmented and distanced from its *a* (as depicted in Figure 1) as well as inducted in the symbolic domain of the master signifier (Verhaeghe, 2019). Therefore, this choosing to be an alienated *being* has the effect of reducing the subject to a non-sensical signifier while facilitating access to language and the possibility of speaking to others.

The alternative to *being* for the subject is to be dissolved into *thinking*²⁷ without the identity bearing function of the signifiers as a nameless element in language (Lacan, 1998e, p. 220). Moati (2014) explains this aspect of alienation as the subject choosing “to be” by renouncing “thinking” for the sake of gaining a “symbolic identity” – the signifier S₁ (p. 158 emphasis in original). As the researcher succinctly puts it – “We are never so solid in our being as when we are not thinking” (p. 158). However, this “not thinking” is not a choice for the subject. It is what Lacan terms as *vel* – whereby the act of making a choice leads to neither this nor that²⁸. Lacan illustrates this with the example of a choice between “your money or your life” in which the person being threatened is going to be deprived of money in either case (Lacan, 1998d, p. 212). Moati (2014) explains this paradox of forced choice as a necessary “*detour*” that entails the

²⁷ Seminar XI uses the terms ‘being and *meaning*’ instead of ‘being and *thinking*’, the latter of which is used by Moati (2014). This difference in terminology is on account of their being some ambiguity in the translation of the original French word *sens* which cannot be accurately translated in English (Evans, 2006, p. 188). The author chooses to use the term *thinking* to avoid confusion in the usage of *meaning* in other contexts.

²⁸ An illustration of this forced choice or *vel* is seen in the narrative of SME I, whose insistence on thinking of what it would mean to follow Agile and to question its suitability for the project prior to being Agile had led to his exclusion from the symbolic cluster of the project.

subject's yielding to a "false being" and without which she cannot access the truth (p. 158 emphasis in original).

The transition into *thinking* for a subject is characterised by recognition of the truth of the subject's own being and of the Other, in other words, upon gaining the knowledge of her *otherness*²⁹ (Lacan, 1998d, p. 214). The subject comes to accept her perpetual subjection to the Other in the Symbolic and is led to reflect on the absence of her meaningful self and the lack in the Other (Lacan, 1998e, p. 221). In doing so, she embraces the enforced choice as her own with the knowledge of its imperativeness. Moati (2014) posits that this realisation of the forced nature of the *vel* also brings to the subject the truth of the Other. During the process of alienation, the subject was led by the Other as a "*cause*" for the subject's advent in language. However, in the process of separating, the subject realigns her relationship with the Other by positioning the latter as a "*reason*" for how she manoeuvres in language (Moati, 2014, p. 160 emphasis added). In developmental psychology, separation is equated with individuation, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, is critical to an individual's "assuming a more independent position" (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 381). Based on the fundamental principle of lack pervading the processes of transition from alienation and separation, the author positions separation as a gradual, re-iterative and transformational process with the promise of an emotionally autonomous position in relation to others.

²⁹ The usage of the term *otherness* will be italicised from this point forward to distinguish it from the usage in literature. The italicised term will specify its conceptual roots in the theory of separation.

5.3. Conceptual framework

The theoretical resources of alienation and separation help to explain why and how the participants cope with their fragmented *selves* through signification and what could lead to an emancipatory position in relation to O/others. However, the author finds that there are certain things that these theories leave unanswered. First, though Lacan (1998d) and Moati (2014) position *being* as integral to the subject's transcendence from the subjugating effects of language, they do not dwell upon the varied intricacies inherent in the varied ways in which the subject is tyrannised and captured by the signifiers. This study finds that these intricacies are pivotal to understanding the different signifiatory efforts and outcomes as it gives insights into the participants' unique and subjective struggles for emotional autonomy. It is thus, that in the discussions (Chapter 9), the understanding of *being* is developed by analysing the differences in the participants' signifiatory attempts based on the nature of their desire for the Other (as has been discussed in subsection 3.2.1).

Second, the singular focus of these theories on what it means for the subject to separate from the Other relegates how this passage is navigated by the participant in the intersubjective domain of the Symbolic. In other words, it does not capture the subject's struggles inherent in her relational existence with others, the striving for recognition and the need to make sense to them. It also does not account for the micro-processes that consider the indeterminacies in the way the subjects deal with the significations of others and struggle to signify while coping with lack in the course of this traversal from alienation to separation. Verhaeghe (2019), too, in his commentary on alienation and

separation, does not account for the relational others beyond stating their role in imposing their reactions to the subject's significations as having a formative effect on the subject's relationship with the Other (p. 373).

The author suspects that the complexities of engaging with the relational other cannot be deciphered without the aid of the shared language of a master signifier and its function as a mirror for the subjects. Bracher (1993, p. 25) expounds on this aspect of intersubjective symbolic association as follows – “If, when I encounter another human subject, it is really our representatives, our signifiers, that are communicating and negotiating with each other, then whenever these representatives get together, my fate as a subject is in some way at stake. That is, what happens to our sense of being or identity is determined to a large degree by what happens to those signifiers that represent us—our master signifiers—particularly the alliances they form with and the wars they wage on other signifiers.”

In consideration of the issues raised above, the author combines the two theoretical strains of participants traversing from alienation to separation and of them identifying with and signifying through the master signifier to others in discourse. Figure 3 presents a conceptual framework integrating these two theoretical approaches and charts the network of conceptual relations necessary for examining the subject's striving to attain an emotionally autonomous position through separation.

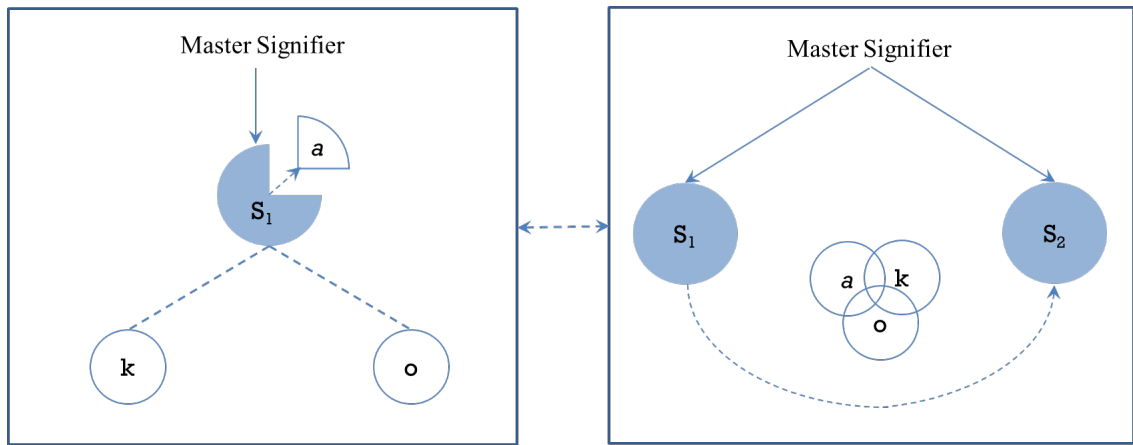


Figure 3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 3 represents the fragmented subject (a , S_1 and S_2), the others (o), knowledge (k), and the master signifier with the Other in the backdrop. The dotted lines in the figure represent the indeterminacies in the process, perpetuated by lack, which causes the subject to repeatedly appeal to the Other with her desire through varied significations of her knowledge.

The master signifier, as the chosen signifier of the Other, has a formative impact on the subject by impelling them to transition to S_1 by the exclusion of their a (Verhaeghe, 2019), as is represented in the left-hand side of the framework. The subject's S_1 is removed from its a and faced with the challenge of configuring a relationship with her knowledge and others driven by the desire to be her want-to-be self, represented by S_2 . The object a by orienting the desire of the subject, guides her approach to knowledge and others. This is inclusive of the indeterminacies involved in articulating her knowledge and desire to others and also the contestation of desires involved in learning from them (Hoedemaekers, 2010, Kosmala, 2012). The author, therefore, suggests that the transition of the subject from S_1 to S_2 is inclusive of a

configuration of the subject's *a*, knowledge and others (inclusive of their desires and significations). (This extends Sköld's (2010) configuration of fantasy (symbolised by the master signifier), desire and knowledge by bringing into the fold the salient presence of others.) The right-hand side of Figure 3 represents the subject's manoeuvres at transitioning from S_1 to S_2 through varied configurations of signifying their *a* to others through mobilisation of their knowledge.

Besides the varied configurations of the subject's *a*, knowledge and their relationship with others, the subject's transition to S_2 is also shaped by the master signifier's impelling the subject to signify their knowledge in identification/dis-identification with it. In the process, it also orientates the subject's knowledge (*savoir-faire*) towards either signifying the existing master signifier or signifying a new master signifier by overthrowing the existing one (Bracher, 1993). However, the conceptual framework does not limit the possibilities of the subject's relationship with the master signifier and remains open to different possibilities and indeterminacies, such as the subject's struggle to signify.

5.4 Research issues

The introductory chapter of this thesis had laid out the three research issues that this study intends to examine. The purpose of this section is to mobilise the conceptual framework and describe how it equips the author to investigate the research issues, which are listed as follows –

- i. How did the participants orientate themselves relative to the prevailing socio-symbolic context?

- ii. How do participants cope with the continual unfolding of their changeable social context?
- iii. From where do the participants draw legitimacy for their significations and how was this manifested in the relations they articulated?

For the first research issue, the arrival of the participants in the socio-symbolic context of organisational change is underpinned by their primal alienation to the mandates of the master signifier and the surrounding symbolic cluster of change (Verhaeghe, 2019). The participant's orientation, therefore, is shaped by her relationship with the master signifier that impels them into being as S_1 and further shapes her desire and identificatory processes. This has the effect of influencing how the participant interprets the master signifier and her role in the project, in alignment with the desire of the organisational Other (Bracher, 1993).

For the second research issue, the inclusion of the master signifier as the cornerstone for the change process also helps in unravelling the desire induced identifications of not only the participant being studied but also that of her others. This manifests as varied significations of the same master signifier that seek to answer the question of what the Other wants based on how they desire the Other (Lacan, 1998d, Verhaeghe, 2019, Bracher, 1993). In this study, this is found in the multiple interpretations of what Agile means and how it should be applied in the project. Furthermore, this has implications on how the changeable context unfolds with the signification of the master signifier by the participants and other employees. This contends the participants with the need to cope with the desires of others in their own

significations based on a configuration of their desires and knowledge. The examination of this process of coping will, therefore, unpack the complexities of the participant's being (S₁) and her transition to her *want-to-be self* (S₂) while coping with the desires of others mediated through the meaninglessness of the master signifier.

Lastly, the author posits that the examination of legitimacy in significations in the last research issue is dependent upon the participants' approach to the O/others. The inevitability of lack in the discourse of the O/others is a given (Lacan, 1998d). The creative force of this lack in the Other, the master signifier and significations of others, gives the participants the avenue to signify their knowledge in alignment with their desire to be (S₂) (Verhaeghe, 2019, Moati, 2014). The participants' significations directed towards filling the symbolic void caused by lack is not only indicative of the pursuit of desire through knowledge but also of a mutual re-positioning of the participants and their O/others (Moati, 2014). Therefore, the legitimacy here can be said to be derived from the identifications of others with the significations of the participants.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has mobilised the conceptual foundations presented in chapters 2,3, and 4 towards presenting a framework for the examination of emotional autonomy in this thesis. The chapter begins with addressing the inadequacies in the understanding of the three key aspects raised in the previous two chapters – the subject's fragmented *selves*, her non-semblance with her mirrored *self* and the mechanisms of the knowledge of *otherness* – through the theories of alienation and separation.

Finally, section 5.3 mobilises the discussion on alienation and separation and integrates it with the theory of discourse to present a conceptual framework for emotional autonomy. The framework is based on the subject's passage through primal alienation, alienation and separation. The framework, set in the oeuvre of the Other, includes the master signifier that enables the analysis of the subject's transition by looking at how it manifests in relation to others.

In light of the conceptual framework and its mobilisation for the examination of the research issues, the author proposes three aspects for empirical exploration – the subject's transition across her fragmented *selves* (*a*, S_1 and S_2), signification of the master signifier to others based on the subject's desire for the Other and knowledge, and finally the subject's relationship with the O/others which is subsumed by desire and that informs her significations. The next chapter proceeds into developing the research methodology for the empirical examination of these aspects.

CHAPTER 6 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Chapter introduction

In the previous chapter, the author presented the conceptual framework on which the study is based and had mobilised it towards the examination of research issues by focusing on specific configurations of the concepts. Based on that mobilisation, the key concepts that serve as methodological considerations for the designing of the research approach in this thesis are as follows -

- i. *fragments of the participants' selves* - inclusive of their speaking self as S_1 and their want-to-be (S_2) and their desires embedded in these fragments as symbolic of their *a*.
- ii. *significations of the master signifier* – the different significations of the master signifier by the participants and how it shapes their accounts of what they do and what is right for the organisation.
- iii. *O/others* – the varied positioning of others in the participants' accounts and references to the organisational Other and its desires through aspects of what is right for the organisation and how it can be achieved.

These three concepts pose the necessity of delving into the participants' desires and struggles manifesting in her signification of knowledge through the master signifier to others. The first section (6.2) of this chapter, therefore, presents the epistemological implications of examining these psychic mechanisms in language with reference to the

existent methodological approaches in the literature. Section 6.3 presents the research design for this study that is based on an interpretivist approach, with details of the component methods used. Section 6.4 discusses the aspect of research conduct that gives a background to the research, details of research access, approach to the empirical material, the author's role as a researcher and ethics. Section 6.5 outlines how the data was analysed and how the patterns for findings emerged from the analysis.

6.2 Approaching psychoanalysis methodologically

Lacan's psychoanalytic theories had gained a reputation for his interpretation of Freud, strong opposition to any assumptions of a rational-individualistic subject and his integration of structural theories of linguistic science and anthropology (Parker and Vanheule, 2014). The integration of Lacan's oeuvre of psychoanalytical theories has presented organisation studies with a plethora of concepts and philosophical approaches to work with. A common thread across these works is the concept of language, without which Lacan (2006, p. 265) claimed nothing about the subject can be known. The discussions on the Symbolic and the theory of discourse in chapters 3 and 4, respectively, have also been proof of this centrality of language and its ontological and epistemological significance. Therefore, in view of the key concepts derived from the conceptual framework for empirical investigation, it is important to deal with the treatment of language in the Lacanian literature in organisation studies, from a philosophic and epistemological perspective.

There are two factors that need to be paid attention to for examining the epistemological implications of researching subjectivity through language. First, in

differing significantly from the social constructionist views, the Lacanian subject is not a co-creator of her own subjectivity manifesting at the level of language. Instead, she is subjected to it in her formation as a *being* (Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007, p. 361). Second, the negative ontology of the subject's failed subjectivity (given the inevitability of lack and the absence of the Real in the Symbolic) does not help in investigating subjectivity through configurations of the subject, language and power, as has been practised in other discourse-based studies (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000). The presence of lack and the inevitable fallibility of subjectivity makes the assumed "positive consistency" between these seemingly stable categories nothing but a fantasy (Contu, Driver and Jones, 2010, p. 311). Therefore, the subject's relationship with language is neither configurational nor is it one of co-construction. It is dictated by the formative impact language has on the subject, and in terms of epistemology, it offers an expression of the subjects' subjectivity that articulates how the subjects "speak for themselves and how they speak to others" (Parker and Vanheule, 2014, p. 1042).

The contentions in formulating a stable empirical relationship between the subject and language are rooted in the philosophical difference between structuralism and poststructuralism. There has been a certain eagerness to place Lacan's work under the umbrella of poststructuralism (Linstead, 2016, Prasad, 2018) and, more recently, postfoundational-ism (Cederstrom and Spicer, 2014, Al-Amoudi and O'Mahoney, 2016). However, the tendency to place Lacan under one philosophical umbrella is often an attempt to lend coherence to his characteristically contradictory and anti-philosophical theorisations (Jones, 2010, p. 212, Chiesa, 2014a, pp. 7 - 8). In the 1950s,

his conceptualisation of the Symbolic was defined by the integration into Freudian thought the influence of structuralists such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi Strauss and Roman Jakobson (Elliott, 2001, p. 141, Homer, 2005, p. 34). Even though he departed from Saussure's conception of the signifier being subjected to the signified and embraced the lack of a stable signification, elements of structuralism remain in the way he positioned the subject in the network of signifiers (Fink, 1995). It is only in what Parker and Vanheule (2014) describe as the third era in Lacan's career that he turned to poststructuralism through the conceptualisation of the Real. Thus, bringing to language the indeterminacies of lack. However, this element of poststructuralism was added to the structural aspect of the Symbolic without any changes to or apologies for its stoic, constrictive impact on the subject. Lacan never quite clarified whether the subject acted upon language or vice versa (Alcorn, 1994, pp. 27 - 28). As a result of this contradiction, it seems fair to assign Lacan a "pivotal place between structuralism and poststructuralism" (Linstead, 2016, p. 173).

The research on Lacan in organisation studies has largely taken two paths – as described by Gabriel (2016) – of psychoanalysing organisations or studying organisations psychoanalytically. The psychoanalysing of organisations has subscribed to the role of the researcher as an interventionist or analyst who identifies psychical mechanisms that hinder an organisation's functioning and redresses those (Arnaud and Vidaillet, 2017, Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007, Arnaud, 2002, Arnaud and Vanheule, 2013, Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003). On the other hand, researchers without any therapeutic ambitions have made a significant contribution in extending the

“explanatory powers” for studying different aspects of the organisational life (Fotaki, Long and Schwartz, 2012) by focusing on unpacking the seemingly irrational human behaviours (Arnaud, 2012, Arnaud and Vidaillet, 2017, Gabriel, 2016).

The approach to studying organisations psychoanalytically has integrated with Critical Management Studies (CMS) – a school of thought that links the irrationality of human behaviour to the flawed nature of the structural forces of power in the organisation (Arnaud and Vidaillet, 2017). The focus of these studies has been on the subject’s encounter with the impossibilities of language and on the mechanisms and intricacies of power and control; towards examining what makes certain discourses more credible than others (Roberts, 2005, Ekman, 2013, Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015, Fleming, 2010).

In keeping with the CMS stance, more recently, researchers have also drawn upon post-foundational-ism to researching Lacan (Al-Amoudi and O’Mahoney, 2016, Cederstrom and Spicer, 2014). Post-foundationalism shares the poststructuralist scepticism for positivism and a “uniform ontology and epistemology” (Al-Amoudi and O’Mahoney, 2016, p. 20) and endorses their belief in “impossibility” enabled by the Lacanian lack and Real (Cederstrom and Spicer, 2014, p. 188). In doing so, it lends to the understanding of how discourses are developed, sustained and contested. It is with reference to this inherent lack of meaning in signifiers (lack) and the role of the master signifier (fantasy) as part of the wider organisational discourse that the subject’s signification attempts have been examined (Jones and Spicer, 2005, Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010, Cederstrom and Spicer, 2014, Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015).

The author, however, finds that both CMS and the post-foundational approach do not fit with the research objectives of this thesis. The focus of this study is to examine how the subjects orientate and cope with the dynamic discourses of organisational change centred around a master signifier and unpack the complexities of such subjective mechanisms from the perspective of the unique instances of the research participants (Arnaud, 2012). The intention, therefore, is not to collectivise the issues identified and relate them back to the varied organisational discourses. Instead, it is to take the formative aspects of the organisational discourse as the point of departure for examining how the participants respond to it, encounter lack and signify their desire and knowledge in coping with it. By looking at the participants' lives without the lenses of power and resistance, this thesis seeks to deconstruct these and examine the nuances of desire for the O/others. Therefore, despite certain overlaps in approach to the subject as subjected to certain powerful discourses, the study takes an interpretive approach to research methodology that is focused on the analysis of the subject's unique account of coping with these discourses and their struggle for signifying a sense of self.

6.2.1 Methodological approach

Separate from the claims of psychoanalysing organisations or intervening by citing problems in the wider organisational discourses, the purpose of this study is to present a Lacanian interpretation of the participants' pursuit of the desire for an emotionally autonomous self in a dynamic context of large-scale organisational change. To this end, this thesis draws upon the notion of psychoanalysis as an "interpretive discipline" that can offer different explanations for opaque phenomena and behaviours

without making any claims to treating or suggesting changes to the organisational discourses that may cause or foster challenges for the employee's pursuit for the desired self (Gabriel, 2016, p. 219).

An important consideration in situating this study is its treatment of the conceptually sensitive issue of the unconscious. One of the key contributions of psychoanalytical literature in organisation studies has been to bring into the fold of analysis the role of the unconscious that underlies the hopes, fears, desires, anxieties (Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007, Gabriel, 2016, Fotaki, Long and Schwartz, 2012). In differing from the role of the researcher, either as an analyst or interventionist, the author does not want to make any claims about either examining or knowing the unconscious of the participants. The unconscious, therefore, is treated as a "theoretical foundation" that anchors an array of psychoanalytical concepts (Gabriel, 2016, p. 220), which for the Lacanian subject finds expression in the subject's lack-of-being (Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007).

In terms of the epistemological implications of studying the participants' use of language, the literature is unanimously focused on the ways in which they "make use of the signifier" (Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007, p. 360). This has also been demonstrated extensively in the researches of Hoedemaekers and Keegan (2010), Hoedemaekers (2010), Kosmala (2012), Driver (2010; 2012; 2013; 2017; 2021). In keeping with this epistemological significance of the participants' use of language, the author presents below the three methodological considerations that informed the research design.

The methodological considerations, however, are not singularly focused on the participants' use of language. Those are instead guided by the objective to enable a critical examination of both the aspects of the participants' subjectivity (through their use of language) and the context of organisational change in Aegis. Therefore, the first methodological consideration is the freedom to use a "complex set of methods" that cater to the examination of "complex organisational processes" (Ybema *et al.*, 2009, p. 6).

As will be described in detail in the next chapter, Aegis was undergoing a dual process of change – building a new software platform for insurance products and adapting an Agile methodology for software development. This had a wide-ranging impact on how employees thought about their work, how they were meant to communicate with one another and at what pace they were meant to work. These demands translated into challenges and complexities that manifested in a continual unfolding of what it meant to *be* Agile, to build Synergy for Aegis and to re-define the insurance products for the new system. Such dynamism and intricacies of the project require a methodological approach that can enable a comprehensive appreciation of the changeable context. To this end, a multi-method approach comprising of (ethnographically inspired) non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews (conducted longitudinally) are employed towards gaining insights into the complexities of the context and the subjective experience of the participants from their accounts, respectively (Collier and Elman, 2008, p. 782, Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2009, Arnaud, 2012).

The second methodological consideration is “immersion” that enables a better understanding of the context and also a familiarity of the participants’ intricate relationship with the terrain, thereby giving the opportunity to both appreciate and uphold the singularity of each participant’s account (Arnaud, 2012, p. 1125). As a result, the author’s application of the non-participant observation methodology was guided by an *emic* (actor-centred) perspective (Collier and Elman, 2008, pp. 782 - 783), whereby the observational data was used specifically as a precursor to the interviews, which were the primary source of data.

The third methodological consideration is giving the centre stage to the participants’ accounts and being guided by them (Arnaud, 2012; Driver, 2014; 2017). The author, as a researcher, therefore, does not approach the study with the supposition of knowing the context, the participants, or their struggles. It is the participants’ significations that are of crucial importance, and the evolving and changing questions of the researcher are a response to those significations (Woźniak, 2010).

In summary, this section explores the varied philosophical approaches prevalent in the literature on Lacan in organisation studies. Founded on the centrality of language, the author distinguishes the Lacanian approach from strict classifications of structuralism and poststructuralism and encourages the embracing of his contradictory approach (and at times even aversion) to philosophy (Chiesa, 2014a). The section also delineates this research from the approach to positioning the researcher as an analyst or interventionist with access to the unconscious, and it also differs from the CMS approach taken by some researchers. Instead, the study is positioned as an interpretivist

portrayal of an organisational setting and the struggles of the participants to articulate a sense of self from a Lacanian lens. The section ends with a presentation of three methodological considerations that inform the research design, discussed next.

6.3 Research design

The research design is based on conducting a longitudinal, immersive research by implementing the methods of – non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The longitudinal aspect serves the purpose of enabling an engagement with the research site over a period of time that allows the author to not only immerse herself in the context but also to witness and examine changes in the context and in the organisational lives of the participants over a period of time (Hermanowicz, 2013). Therefore, the choice of methods, primarily of conducting non-participant observation and interviews, are inspired by the longitudinal design. In terms of access and participants, this requires the opportunity to interview the same group of participants over a period of time while observing their activities in meetings and other processes. Such an intense and extensive nature of this research design had, therefore, also determined the choice of studying only one research site. It would not have been feasible to do justice to the complexity of the research context in Aegis if the author had studied more than one organisation and would have led to the danger of providing “quick” instead of thick descriptions (Bate, 1997, p. 1150, Collier and Elman, 2008).

The multi-method approach of combining interviews and non-participant observation has been recognised as prevalent in the study of organizational change (Garcia and Gluesing, 2013, p. 436). Though interviews are indispensable to this

research's methodological objective to give primacy to the accounts of the participants in their own words (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2009, Arnaud, 2012), those alone would not have done justice to the richness of the context (Alvesson, 2009). First, interviews alone not have allowed the author to ask questions that capture their coping with the complexities of their daily work life. It would also have been difficult to appreciate the intersubjective mechanisms that underpinned the discursive network of relationships in the project that was guided by principles of collaboration³⁰ (Van der Waal, 2009). Second, the onus of guiding the author into the context would have been on the participants, which would have been further affected by aspects of their busyness and dispositions. The author would also have been forced to choose between knowing the context and knowing the experience of the participants (Lana and Savin-Baden, 2010). Third, it would not have allowed the freedom for the author to probe the participants on unfolding events without knowing the goings on in the project firsthand. Probing the different perspectives of the participants to the same event has been of immense value for this research, as will be seen in the findings with reference to the participants TL II and `BA III.

The research design adopted in this thesis parallels that of Lacanian literature in organization studies in its use of interviews as the primary source of data collection. However, there are differences in other aspects of the methodology that will be briefly discussed here. Firstly, quite a few studies have employed a case study design in the methodology (cf. Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010, Ekman, 2013, Vidaillet and Gamot,

³⁰This aspect will be elaborated upon in section 7.3 in the next chapter.

2015). But in the context of Aegis, a case study approach involving a single phenomenon would not have equipped the study to cater to its research issues that focus upon different psycho-social processes of orientation, coping and legitimisation in the context of an organisational change. Equally, understanding the complexities of the fast-paced and dynamic project would have been impossible without the author immersing herself in the field (Kenny, 2012). She could not have made informed choices about who to interview and what to ask without the valuable opportunity to observe their daily lives.

Secondly, there are variations in the ways interviews have been conducted in the literature. Predominantly, researchers have adopted the method of inviting the participants to signify a given signifier or impelling signification around certain signifiers such as performance, competence or potential (cf. Hoedemaekers, 2010, Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010, Kosmala, 2012, Ekman, 2013). Harding (2007) approached interviewing as a medium for the co-construction of accounts through the interviewer's and the interviewee's psycho-social formation of their selves through the interaction (Langley and Meziani, 2020). Sköld (2010)³¹ and Vidaillet and Gamot (2015)³², on the other end, have conducted interviews over a period of time to capture the participant(s) experience or accounts of unfolding events while enabling the interviewees to guide them into areas that were of significance to them. The research design in this thesis is closer to the flexible approach of Sköld (2010) that not only

³¹ Sköld (2010) describes the interview process as informal conversations in his research.

³² Vidaillet and Gamot (2015) have conducted different kinds of data by interviewing some participants once and others repeatedly. Therefore, their approach to the method is not comparable to the research design of this study.

includes varied methods to probe the research context but also informs a conversational tone that enables the participants to guide the interviewer into areas that are of importance to them.

Thirdly, several studies of organisational change and subjectivity in the Lacanian literature have integrated documentary analysis into the research design to take into account the rules and regulations of the context and, in some cases, the discursive relations therein (cf. Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010, Hoedemaekers, 2010, Sköld, 2010, Kenny, 2012, Ekman, 2013, Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015). However, in the context of this study, engaging in such documentary analysis was not very suitable because the primary focus of the study was to uphold the irreducible singularity of the participants' accounts of themselves (Arnaud, 2012). With this in mind, it was useful to examine the discourses surrounding the participants and the ways in which they identified with those. As an instance of one such discourse, the author had found crucial information in Aegis' in-house Agile training material provided to employees, which the author had then integrated into her field notes. Besides that, the author did not find that documents pertaining to planning and meeting minutes made any significant contribution to her focus on participants' subjectivities. However, the author does recognise the insights analysing email exchanges could have offered by giving the opportunity to examine how employees signify and respond to others' significations, but she did not have access to any emails of the participants. As a result of these factors, the decision was made to exclude documentary analysis from the research design.

6.3.1 Non-participant observation

Observing “processes and activities” in the everyday lives of the participants is a valued method in qualitative research at large (Flick, Kardorff and Steinke, 2004, p. 193). Non-participant observation, as a variant of such observational methods, is characterised by the researcher’s presence in meetings and discussions in the capacity of observing and recording without interacting with the participants (Williams, 2008). The method enables the researcher to examine the interplay of meaning arising from the context and the participants’ subjectivities. In this study, it entailed observation of how participants accepted or rejected “representations offered by others” and how they identified signifiers significant to the context (Kenny, 2012, p. 1180). In the observation of meetings, studying how certain signifiers are approached and avoided by participants was instrumental in developing a close understanding of the context, the participant and their difference from others (Sköld, 2010, Arnaud, 2012, Kenny, 2012).

The author did not have permission to record the meetings, and hence, taking extensive fieldnotes was crucial to applying the method of observation. While taking these notes during these meetings, the author did not exercise any judgement on the relevance of the observation as some of those may emerge as important upon the consolidation of notes from other observations or methods such as interviews (Ostrower, 1998). The author had followed the technique of jotting described by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) as a precursor to “full written notes...(that) capture bits of talk and action from which the fieldwork can begin to sketch social scenes” (p. 88). This technique of

jotting in short phrases using abbreviations and symbols were employed by the author to keep up with the pace of meetings.

During the observation of meetings, the author tried to make remain as discreet as possible by sitting at the back of the room. But in some cases, it was not possible to do so, and she had to sit along with the participants and other employees. Therefore, the impact her presence had on the meetings cannot be accounted for. The author must add that this study is not bereft of her anxieties and excitement during fieldwork. Her being overwhelmed by the magnanimity of the project in the initial days is as much a part of her fieldnotes, interview questions and observations, as are her familiarity and comfort developed during the course of the fieldwork (Ybema and Kamsteeg, 2009).

Engaging in observation of the daily life of participants in the organisations also enables access to the “behind the scenes” avenues of the research site that lay beyond the observation of meetings and other formalised activities (Ybema, 2010, p. 491). The informal conversations in the café and corridors contribute to the empirical investigation by adding texture to the researcher’s understanding of the terrain, indicating areas for further examination through other methods and helping in building a rapport with the participants (Ropers-Huilman and Winters, 2010, Kenny, 2012, Ybema, 2014, Ybema and Horvers, 2017).

6.3.2 Interviews

Interviews constitute the second element of the research design and the primary method of data collection in this study. These were designed to be carried out along with non-participant observation. The significance of using interviews as a methodological

tool in this research is to develop an understanding and interpretations of the context and the participants, rather than elicit answers to a standard set of questions over a period of time (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). As Gerson and Horowitz (2003) aptly point out, interviews help in unravelling the social changes by examining the “intricacies of individual lives. Individual interviews provide the opportunity to examine how large-scale transformations are experienced, interpreted, and ultimately shaped by the response of social actors” (p. 201). Therefore, in this study, semi-structured interviews are employed as the means to probe the subjectivity of the participants through their accounts of working in the organisation, as events, perceptions and feelings unfold during the course of study.

Semi-structured interviews are a useful way of “obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Svend Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 6). In abiding by the methodological consideration of the study being guided by the accounts of the participants, the interviews were conducted with the objective of surfacing the incoherent, contradictory struggles and the polyvocality of the interviewee (Frosh, 2007, Ybema, 2010, Skinner, 2012). The author was also sensitive to the need of making the interviewee not feel vulnerable or subject to scrutiny and therefore. Therefore, it was key to give them the opportunity and freedom to raise topics, concerns and questions of their own accord (Van der Waal, 2009, Brinkmann, 2018).

In keeping with a longitudinal design, the interviews were conducted in two phases, in tandem with the observational process. In the first phase of interviews, the

author's intent was to gain an insight into the participants' background in Aegis and in SDC, their experience of working in the project, inclusive of their perception of the different changes. A list of possible questions, from which the author had chosen depending upon familiarity with the participants from the observational occurrences and informal conversations, are presented in Figure 4. The author had also asked the participants for suggestions of areas that she should look into for the study.

- List of possible questions for first phase of interviews**

 1. How long have you been working in Aegis?
 2. When and how did you come to join SDC?
 3. Why did you opt for this transition?
 - a. What was the initial experience like?
 - b. Describe your role, what does it entail?
 4. What is the experience of working according to Agile like?
 5. What are you working on now?
 6. How do you cope with the fast-paced environment?
 7. How different are things now from when you started working in SDC?

Figure 4. List of possible questions for the first phase of interviews

The first phase of interviews was also crucial for establishing a rapport with the participants and making them feel secure in sharing their accounts with the author. To this end, the author had set a conversational tone to the interviews, which was made possible by the following four factors (Van der Waal, 2009). First, the author mostly asked open-ended questions and let the participants have the opportunity and freedom to raise topics, concerns and questions of their own accord and refuse to talk about things they were not comfortable discussing (Van der Waal, 2009, Brinkmann, 2018). Second, the author had from the very beginning tried to form an “empathetic engagement” with

the participants by expressing appreciation, understanding and devoid of judgements and also using humour in appropriate situations (Langley and Meziani, 2020, p. 372). Second, the author had positioned the participants as the “subject supposed to know” by explicitly stating her desire to understand the complexity of the project and learn about their perspectives and experience of working on it (Woźniak, 2010, p. 399). Lastly, the author used the signifiers used by the participants in her questions to not only signal attentiveness and understanding but also to stay close to the language used by the participants (Tosey, Lawley and Meese, 2014). To help with this, the author took note of keywords and phrases during the interview and also drew from the field notes taken during observations.

The second phase of interviews was conducted at an interval in which sufficient time had passed to allow for the occurrence of some change or movement in the participants’ accounts and/or the context (Hermanowicz, 2013). The questions in this phase were based on issues from the first interview that needed to be examined further on changes and challenges the participants had encountered in the interim and issues identified by the author from her observations. The purpose of this second phase of interviews was to gain insights into how the participants interpret and identify with how their situation, work and self has changed or evolved (Hermanowicz, 2013).

It is important to reflect on the factors that shaped the dynamics between the author and the participants in interviews to recognise the role played by the author in the data that was derived from that interaction (Skyes and Treleaven, 2009). The first of these factors is the positioning of the participant as the subject supposed to know

(Woźniak, 2010). This had the advantage of the interviewees in several cases being eager to share their experiences, generally coming from the perspective of things that were not going well in the project and how they were not being heard. In some instances, however, this had certain implications that impacted the subtle mechanism of power and control in the interviews. For instance, in certain instances, the participants took control of the conversation by talking about things that could help the author understand the organisation and the project better. The emphasis on context over the subjective experience of the participants' required the author to steer the conversation tactfully to get the participants' perspectives. The author did this by being respectful of the participants' recommendation by noting down the suggestion or following up with a question or comment in response to their advice, and then gradually changed the subject to talk about *how* things were being done as opposed to *what* was being done (Fontana and Frey, 2003). While this approach was helpful with most participants, it did not work for a few participants who were reticent about talking about the *hows* as opposed to the *whats*. This was the case with most of the contractors working on the project, as will also be discussed in subsection 6.4.3 (b).

The second factor pertains to the multiple positions that the author had to assume during the process of data collection at large (Skyes and Treleaven, 2009). These multiple positions relate to the author managing the positioning of herself both as a doctoral researcher and sometimes as a 'good student' who was learning from the participants (as the subjects supposed to know) (Vähäsantanen and Saarinen, 2013). On several occasions, the author was asked about what she was finding or learning about the

context from her fieldwork during informal chats with the participants. The author, in such instances, was very cautious as she did not want to say anything that may influence future interactions with the participants during interviews. Therefore, the author based her response on what she had surmised about the particular participant's views from her interactions (Tosey, Lawley and Meese, 2014), added some 'safe' opinions that would be in agreement with that view and finally led the conversation to related aspects that she would like to talk about with the participant in the next interview.

6.3.3 Conclusion of data collection

In concluding the description of the research design, it is important to consider how the decision to end the process of data collection was arrived at. This decision, in theory, is said to be determined by *saturation* – a state whereby “no new properties of the pattern emerge” and “theoretical completeness” is attained (Glaser, 2001, p. 191). The author contends that attaining this “theoretical completeness” in an examination of subjectivity in the context of organisational change is a tall, if not impossible, order. This is because the changeable circumstances that the participants face are dynamic and imply a continual shift in the way they adapt, cope and signify (Johnsen and Gudmand-Høyer, 2010, p. 341). The subject thus is always in making (Lacan, 1998b). In keeping with this theoretical position, the study does not intend to make the claim that it has conclusively captured all the various psycho-social mechanisms inherent in this subjective process – a claim rendered impossible by the limits of language and the susceptibility of this research to symbolic lack.

The decision to conclude the research was, therefore, based on two factors. The first factor was the assurance of having sufficient data to meet the research objectives and to explain the theoretical categories and patterns derived from the empirical insights (Charmaz, 2014). This assurance was based on the author's identification of struggles to transition between the different *selves* of the participants and by the absence of new codes being generated from additional data in some cases. The second factor pertained to more practical considerations. Weiner (2007) posits that saturation of data is more of a judgement as opposed to a decision derived from purely theoretical considerations. She emphasises the need to recognise practical considerations, termed as 'situation of research' that includes factors such as considerations of time, funding and other feasibilities.

The purpose of this section was to present the research design based on the combination of the methods of non-participant observation and interviews. The section reviews the use of the methods used in the Lacanian literature in organization studies. This is followed by distinguishing the research design employed in this thesis from those used in literature, based on its variance from a case study, exclusion of documentary analysis as a method and the difference in the way interviews are approached and conducted. The component methods of non-participant observation and interviews are then discussed with reference to their utility to this study and details of how those were employed.

6.4 Research conduct

The purpose of this section is to provide details of how the study was conducted by the author. This begins with presenting a background to this research that has implications for how this study is shaped and conducted (6.4.1). This is followed by details of how contact with Aegis was established for participation in this study and the extent to which the author was given access to the organisation (6.4.2). Next, subsection 6.4.3 offers details of how the research design was implemented and the empirical material gathered was treated by the author. This is followed by useful information on the ethical standards applied in this study (6.4.4), followed by a note on the role of the author's subjectivity in this research.

6.4.1 Background to the research

Prior to pursuing doctoral research, the author had based her MRes. Dissertation on Lacan's theories. The dissertation, too, was focused on emotional autonomy and had examined its interrelationship with strategic change in financial organisations. In a way, the doctoral thesis is an extension of the focus on emotional autonomy inspired by the potential of the concept discovered in the dissertation. However, in this doctoral journey, the author had approached the previous study only as a point of departure, taking away with herself the knowledge of the existent literature on emotional autonomy and a preliminary understanding of Lacan's theory of discourse.

The doctoral study, differing from the MRes. Dissertation is founded on a deep engagement with Lacan's theories of subjectivity, which led the author to suspect a link between emotional autonomy and the subject's striving for a sense of self. Therefore, the

fieldwork was designed with the objective to explore in depth this struggle for a sense of self, which may include, among other aspects, how the participants orientated themselves to their changeful context, coped with the process of change and also signified themselves through their actions and talk. The author's intent here was to let the potential for emotional autonomy emerge from the data rather than actively seek it and risk finding *only* what one is looking for. In this sense, the research takes an inductive approach (Charmaz, 2014). However, it will be inaccurate to describe the research approach as being purely inductive. In the analysis of the data, the author depended on "theoretical preconceptions" that informed her ability to identify patterns and themes and influenced the process of subsequent data collection, thereby characterising the research approach as a combination of inductive and abductive approaches (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2018, p. 5).

The MRes. Dissertation also influenced the choice of research site for the current study. The valuable data gathered from interviewing employees in the financial sector in the dissertation had indicated the potential richness that can be explored through a more extensive and immersive research approach. Therefore, the choice of research sites in this study was primarily focused on financial organisations. This appeal of the financial sector for research for both the studies was based on the continual and radical changes that the financial sectors are perpetually subjected to on account of regulatory changes, technological advancements and challenges of the economy (Hein *et al.*, 2008).

6.4.2 Research access

The process of seeking access was based on reaching out to potential organisations with a proposal that detailed the research topic and methods for the investigation that specified the nature of engagement required from the organisation and its employees. The proposal also addressed the crucial issues of how the author intended to maintain confidentiality and uphold the ethical standards laid out by the University of Strathclyde. In describing the research to the practitioners in the industry, the author was particularly cautious of sensitivity in financial organisations to issues around disclosures and scrutiny (Michel, 2014). As a result, she had translated the research issues in terms of examining how employees adjusted and coped with the process of organisational change (Tosey, Lawley and Meese, 2014). This implied a focus on how employees think about their work or the difference it makes to how they do their work, their position within the organisation and the way in which they associate with their work life. This distanced the focus of this study away from the actual strategic plan of the organisation and aimed it on the way it impacted the employees and how they perceived and approached it.

Research access for Aegis was arranged through the professional network of the author's primary supervisor, Dr Peter McInnes. Dr McInnes's contact was an employee in Aegis and had introduced him and the author to the Product Owner of the Policy Unit³³ (pseudo named in this study as PO II) in the project over a teleconference call. PO II had expressed enthusiasm and support for the proposal, and the access for research

³³ These job roles and the organisational structure of the project studied in Aegis will be described in section 7.3 in the next chapter.

was negotiated based on two terms – (i) signing of a Confidentiality Agreement between the author and Aegis and (ii) sharing of the study’s finds with regards to efficacies of the project with PO II after the study was completed. As part of her access, the author was able to attend any meeting, as long as the participants involved did not object to it. She was also given an official email account that gave her access to the employee directory and calendars through Microsoft Outlook. It also enabled her to selectively access the project newsletters and the project management software, VITA (pseudonym).

6.4.3 Data collection and treatment

The fieldwork had commenced at the beginning of August and ended in mid-December, in the year 2015. During the span of these four and a half months, the author had spent four days a week in the field, totalling up to a sum of 72 days. In the initial week, the author had received valuable support from a participant, pseudo-named in this study as TA (Transformation Analyst), who had very kindly introduced the author to most employees in the project, suggested and enabled access to meetings that could be helpful for gaining an initial understanding of the project and how it was implementing Agile. TA remained a go-to person for the author during the course of the study.

During the course of the study, the author had followed three teams – Teams I, II and III. TA had suggested the study of Teams II and III as they were working on very challenging products with significant implications for generating value for the business. TA had also introduced the author to the Team Leads (TL II and TL III) of both the teams and asked them to invite the author to their meetings. The author had approached Team I (belonging to Management Information Unit) on her own after establishing an

initial rapport with the team members. The team was interesting to the author for two reasons – first, the team was working on developing a Management Information System on Synergy, and unlike others, were not working on building policies on the system. Second, it was the only team outside the Policy Unit located in the research site and had a distinct discursive structure with its PO (I) playing the role of both a Product Owner and a Business Analyst.

The empirical investigation began with observing some ongoing meetings for the first three days, jotting fieldnotes and speaking informally with the members of the various teams by asking them questions about the meetings. The intent of these informal conversations was to develop familiarity between the author and the participants, understanding the basic aspects of what the teams were working on and building trust. The process of interviewing began from the fifth day of the fieldwork.

a. Non-participant observation

In implementing the non-participant observation method, the author had regularly attended the meetings listed below along with the details of how many of those meetings were observed –

- ~ Stand Ups for Teams II and III occurring on a daily basis (134)
- ~ Retrospectives – a meeting held every fortnight at different levels of the project (24)
- ~ Other meetings related to planning and prioritisations at the team and project level (23)³⁴.

³⁴ The terminologies of the meetings listed here will be described in detail in subsection 7.3.2.

In total, the author had observed 181 meetings. The Team Leads of the two teams had sent the author a meeting invite for the rest of the year to attend the Stand Ups and Retrospectives for each of their teams. The author could not attend the Stand Up held by Team I as it coincided with that of Team III. Also, besides the teams, the management and Project Managers and Business Analysts had separate Retrospectives. Another retrospective was held by the Business Analysts and the Design Architects. The author had access to those meetings too because of being invited by TA, PO II and another participant who is referred to in this thesis as BDC (Business Design Consultant).

The jottings taken by hand in a notebook during observations were later typed into a Word document with details pertaining to the purpose of the meeting observed, attendees present, related information and, more importantly, minutes of discussions. The jottings of these discussions were customised to focus on how certain signifiers that emerged to be of importance were approached by different participants through diagrams, as is depicted in Figure 5.

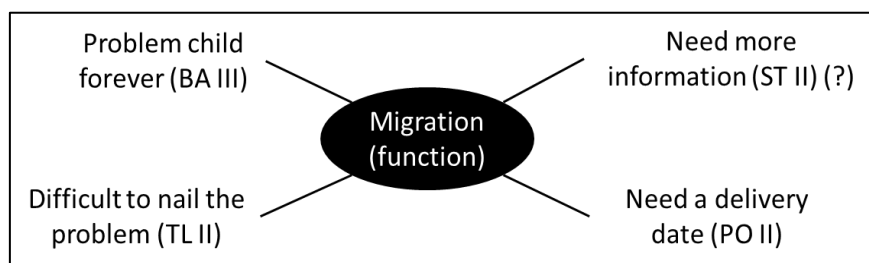


Figure 5. Fieldnotes on participants' approach to a signifier

The question mark symbol (?) next to ST II's comments depicted in the figure is a reference for pursuing this topic with the participant in the next interview. Also included in these typed observations were short codes for the author's response to those observations. This was done with the intent of questions the author's assumptions and

being aware of her emotional response (Saldana, 2013, Ybema and Horvers, 2017, Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). These amounted to a total of 175 typed pages of fieldnotes. In addition, the author had maintained a separate word document for each of the 36 participants, which included observational notes relevant to the participant and also related questions for the next interview.

Besides the observation of meetings, the author had found the behind the scenes access to be particularly useful in getting a more complete and nuanced understanding of the project's present state as well events in the past that have a bearing on the former (Ybema and Horvers, 2017). It also gave the author the opportunity to build rapport with the participants by going for lunches and coffee with them. These informal interactions helped her gain the confidence of participants who were initially hesitant to participate. More importantly, during these occasions, some participants introduced the author to other potential participants to whom the author would not have had access to otherwise.

b. Interviews

In the early stages, the author had interviewed as many people and observed as many meetings as she could to expand the spectrum of her data collection in keeping with her research question (Böhm, 2004). The interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone, and the files were transferred from the device to a computer every day and stored in the University's local network drive. A backup was also taken in the University's cloud service, Onedrive. The audio files were labelled with the pseudonym assigned to the participant and the serial number of interviews for that participant. For

instance, if it was the second interview for the third Software Developer participating in the study, then the file was named SD III_2.

In all, the author had interviewed 36 participants. Of these participants, 3 had declined to have their interviews audio recorded, 16 had been interviewed twice, two had been interviewed thrice, and 15 were interviewed once. In addition, there were 5 unrecorded interviews for which the author had taken extensive interview notes. The interviews typically lasted from 45 to 75 minutes. The recorded interviews amounted to data of 40 hours and 21 minutes. From these 36 participants, 31 were immersed in the Agile change process on a daily basis. The remaining 5 participants were either in periphery job positions related to the project, such as that of a Communications Specialist, Agile Training Coach, Design Architect, or had left the project.

Interviews with participants were scheduled by first looking at their availability in their Outlook Calendar. At times, the author would also walk up to the participants and inquire about their availability. A password-protected MS Excel sheet was maintained to keep track of how many participants had been interviewed, along with the dates, venue and number of interviews conducted. A redacted version of this tracker is presented in Table 2 that provides the necessary information about the number of participants, interviews and PEIs.

There were a few constraints in the process of data collection relating to the context of the study. The fast pace of the project and the heavy workloads of the participants made it difficult for the participants to make time for interviews. The frequent transitions of the participants in and out of SDC and contractors travelling

onshore and offshore added to this problem. Additionally, contractors from one particular company were uncomfortable expressing their views or sharing their experiences and hence, refused to participate in this research in a meaningful way. The author suspects that given the demands made on the contractors by two powerful discourses – of Aegis and of their own employer – the accounts of these contractors could have provided rich insights for this study.

S. No	Pseudonym	No. of interviews	Total time duration (mins)	Other details
Audio-recorded interviews				
1	BA I	1	50	Transferred to another project
2	BA II	2	110	
3	BA III	2	130	
4	BA IV	2	106	
5	BA V	2	90	
6	BA VI	2	102	
7	SME I	1	65	Transferred to another project
8	SME II	2	45	One interview could not be recorded
9	SME III	1	39	Transferred to another project
10	SD I	1	50	
11	SD II	2	80	Contractor
12	SD III	2	110	
13	SD IV	2	90	
14	SD V	2	110	
15	SD VI	1	30	
16	ST I	3	140	
17	ST II	3	76	Contractor
18	ST III	1	24	Transferred offshore/Contractor
19	ST IV	1	50	

S. No	Pseudonym	No. of interviews	Total time duration (mins)	Other details
Audio-recorded interviews				
20	TL I	1	40	Transferred offshore/Contractor
21	TL II	2	50	
22	TL III	1	50	
23	PM I	2	110	
24	PM II	1	50	
25	PO I	1	60	
26	PO II	2	65	
27	BDC	2	120	
28	ITM	1	45	
29	DA	1	20	
30	TA	2	83	Transferred to another project
31	Agile Coach	1	50	
32	Prev. PO	1	65	
33	CS	2	108	
Non-audio recorded interviews				
34	SD VII	2	70	Contractor
35	BA VII	2	40	Contractor
36	BA VIII	1	40	Contractor
Details of pseudonyms used				
BA – Business Analyst		SME – Subject Matter Expert		
SD – Software Developer		ST – Software Tester		
TL – Team Lead		PM – Project Manager		
PO – Product Owner		ITM – IT Manager		
DA – Design Architect		TA – Transformation Analyst		
CS – Communications Specialist				

Table 2. Details of participants interviewed

6.4.4 Ethics

Prior to commencing fieldwork, the proposal for this research was approved by the University Ethics Committee. The author had submitted to the committee a proposal that outlined the nature of the research, which included the following three aspects -

- ~ details of the research objectives
- ~ outline of research methodology and description of desired participants
- ~ consideration of any potential ethical implications of the study.

The author had abided by the ethical standards of the study in five ways. Firstly, for the purposes of seeking participation in the study from employees, the author had explained the research objective and had responded to follow-up questions about it during the course of the study. Secondly, participants were explained that their participation was entirely voluntary, and they could choose to withdraw their participation at any point. They were also informed of their choice to not have their interviews audio recorded, which was opted for by three participants. Thirdly, and more crucially, the author had explained to them that their data would be treated with utmost confidentiality, and no one besides her would have access to any data pertaining to them (in the form of notes, audio recording or transcriptions). Fourthly, the author had provided them with a Participant Information Sheet and sought their signatures on a Consent Form as an agreement to participating in the study³⁵. The former document also included contact details of the author, the primary supervisor and the University Ethics Committee, whom the participants could contact if they had any concerns about their

³⁵ The template for Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form are included in the Appendices.

participation in the study. Lastly, the author had securely stored the audio files, electronic versions of the field notes and any documentation sourced from Aegis by saving those in a password protected computer accessed only by the author. The notebooks in which the author had taken field notes were also kept in a secure place without access to anyone but herself. The methods of anonymization of the organisation, project and the participants have already been mentioned in this chapter. Besides committing to these criteria laid out by the university, the author, in general, had followed an ethical research practice and remained cautious of the safety of the participants in the study (Hopf, 2004).

6.4.5 The 'author' and I

This thesis is as much a culmination of my academic quest (as an author) as it is of the impact this research has had on other aspects of my *self*. At one level, I had brought to this study my desire for knowledge and insights into the participants' struggle for themselves, with the hope of gaining a better understanding of emotional autonomy. This desire-induced identification led me to engage with the symbolic world of Aegis, the participants and of Lacan and the intellectual traditions of the academic community that I am a part of, and struggle to signify a meaning derived from those. On another level, the introduction of these new discourses to my life led me to reflect on the meaning of emotional autonomy in my own intersubjective existence. In this section, I attempt to account for those entanglements between my personal and academic quest for emotional autonomy that have had an impact on this thesis (to the extent that I am aware of those).

Detachment - The first imprint of my personal struggle can be found in the way detachment has been approached in this thesis. Much like the dismissal of autonomy as impossible by poststructuralists, I began by dismissing the possibility of detachment on account of my understanding of intersubjectivity. However, in the process of reflecting on my life situations, I realised that the desire for detachment is as important as the desire for autonomy irrespective of their unattainability. The desire symbolises recognition of lack and the stimulus to cope with something that cannot be dealt with in its entirety. This realisation changed my perspective on detachment, as is also included in my analysis of the detachment and attachment approaches to emotional autonomy in subsection 2.3.1.

Others in the mirror – My understanding of the nuances of the mirror stage has evolved over the years of working on the thesis. While researchers have found a semblance of it in the way subjects associate with signifiers (Harding, 2007, Hoedemaekers, 2010, Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010), very little attention was paid to the impact that the significations of others had on the subject's articulations. I was made aware of this absence of the other in my own struggle to identify with the signifier of PhD (and myself at large). I found that my struggles to interpret and signify were repeatedly tangled with the significations of others about how and when I needed to do the PhD and what its significance for me is or should be. It was only through therapy that I was able to distinguish my identification with this research from that of the others.

When I returned to the theory of the mirror phase with this experience of the blurred boundaries between the self and others, I noted the absence of the desire of the

other. The (m)other not only identifies the ‘me’ in the mirror image for the gazing subject but also underpins that recognition with how she sees the subject. This further extends into how then that mirrored self is pursued by the subject as she copes with other’s signification of that same object. It is also from the same perspective that I became aware of the possibilities of incongruence between the subject’s mirror image and the subject’s own sense of self. This finds a place in my analysis of how the subject’s form a sense of self (in subsection 3.2.2) and in the way, the participants (BA VI, SD III, SME I) cope with the sense of self projected on to them by the others through the extimate master signifier in Chapter 8.

The master – My relationship with Lacan’s teachings has been susceptible to the same interplay of fantasy, desire and lack. In the earlier stages of my research journey, I was overcome with the fantasy of finding the answer to all questions through Lacan. My supervisor saw the problem of this fantasy-induced identification with Lacan and persistently urged me to think by saying – “this is not Lacan’s thesis; what do you have to say”. Eventually, as I delved more and more into the data, I began to encounter the absences in my knowledge of Lacan. This kindled the desire to say what Lacan did not about the world I saw through this research. The interdiscursive spaces in discourse (which are discussed at length in Chapter 9) are not only indicative of alternate perspectives to the master signifier but are also symbolic of the discovery of my own voice and perspective as a researcher. And, as a researcher, I am also conscious of emotional autonomy being a fantasy of knowledge that fulfils an unknown lack (Woźniak, 2010).

This thesis is, thus, an outcome of the interplay of my subjectivity with the different symbolic clusters and are not proposed as the ultimate Truth of the participants' work-life or of the organisations undertaking of change. There can be several possible interpretations of the data gathered in this research and equally several legitimate ways of gathering that data (Pavon - Cuellar, 2014, p. 328). The purpose here is not to surpass the signifier with a definite signified. Instead, it is to present *a* view into the struggles of participants' subjectivity in a complex and intricately diverse organisational setting undergoing change and illustrating the utility of certain concepts and dynamics in interpreting such circumstances.

In summary, this section discusses the factors that have impacted the formulation and conduct of this research based on the author's previous research experiences. This relates to the choice of studying the concept of emotional autonomy from a Lacanian lens and the choice of financial organisation as a research site. This discussion was followed by details of how access for research was negotiated with Aegis and how the data was collected by providing details of jotting fieldnotes and conducting interviews. It also included information about how much data was gathered and how it was stored. In the last two subsections, the crucial aspects of how an ethical standard for the thesis was maintained and what was the role of the author's subjectivity in the process were accounted for.

6.5 Analysis

The analysis of the data was done with an emphasis upon "open exploration" (Ekman, 2013, p. 1165) and upon "building a relationship" (Star, 2007, p. 80) with the

data and the participants through a process of categorising, summarising and making analytic sense of the data (Charmaz, 2014). In addition to the value of rigorous coding for a nuanced analysis of the data, the choice for this analytical approach was further validated by its expert application in the research of Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe (2003), Kenny (2010, 2012) and Ekman (2013).

The analytical process had two aspects – (i) coding of the field notes and visual diaries and (ii) coding of the interview data. The analysis of the field notes was done by submitting it to a process of initial open coding, whereby key processes, properties, participants use of language were described in non-theoretical codes. These codes were useful for providing cues to be explored in the interviews and for creating a textured understanding of the complex context for the participant. However, given the methodological consideration to be driven in this research by the accounts of the participants (Arnaud, 2012), the field notes were not submitted to further analysis.

The coding of interviews was done through repetitive listening of the audio files and selective transcribing of the data. The data was coded in Microsoft Word, with a separate document for each participant. Coding was done in segments of approximately 2 minutes. The codes were numbered in the following format – the number of interview followed by the serial number for each (approximately 2-minute-long) segment of the data with the time duration mentioned in brackets. For example, while coding the first segment of a participant's second round of interviews, the author would label it as 2.1 (0:10 – 2:15). Besides the codes for each segment, there were also three columns allotted for each of the following –

- ~ a brief description of what the participant was speaking about,
- ~ transcribing certain key quotes or passages and
- ~ notes on what was interesting to the author about these codes.

Italicization, underlining and bolding were also used to indicate certain important quotations or codes (Saldana, 2013).

The overall process of analysing the data was based on seeking answers in the data to the following sets of questions –

- i. “What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
- ii. How exactly do they do this? What specific means/ and or strategies do they use?
- iii. How do members talk about, characterize, and understand what is going on?
- iv. What do I see going on here?” (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011, p. 319)
- v. What assumptions am I making about the concerned participants and what they are saying?
- vi. Why is this interesting to me? (Saldana, 2013)

This list of questions gave the author a framework for approaching the analysis while remaining true to the exploratory approach, striving to filter her biases and avoiding the pitfall of imposing prior knowledge on the data. The technique of coding used for the analysis was implemented in three phases, as is detailed below.

6.5.1 First phase: open coding

The first phase of open coding was applied during the fieldwork. This method of coding was quick, spontaneous and hence, not very theoretically grounded. It was done with the intent of shaping the directions of the exploration in fieldwork (Saldana, 2013). The codes in this phase were focused on the processes, actions and on identifying the different properties of the participants' work life. This had amounted to a total of 120 codes.

The value of this first phase of open coding was seen in the way Agile was approached in the early stages of the fieldwork. In the initial stages, there was an emphasis on examining how Agile was received by the participants of the study. This emphasis was partly derived from the vast symbolic presence of Agile in the project (through posters, the prevalence of Agile ceremonies and the widespread use of Agile terminologies in conversations) and, to some extent, by the author's initial overwhelmed response to the research context. However, after the first round of initial coding, the author found aspects that were equally and if not more intriguing than the participants' apparent positions of favouring Agile or not. Expanding the analytical focus in interviews and observations after the first phase of coding revealed territories where Agile was not explicitly involved but was an implicit cause (Böhm, 2004, Charmaz, 2014). This surfaced the contradictions in the participants' signification wherein they expressed a certain ambivalence towards the signifier, despite their initial praise, as it disrupted their work (Shortt and Izak, 2020, p. 9).

6.5.2 Second phase: Subcoding

In this phase second phase of coding, the initial codes were refined and redefined after the discarding of sparse codes. This led to the reduction of the codes from 120 in the first phase to 50. In the process of refining and redefining the initial codes, the objective was to capture unique attributes of the participants' accounts while identifying patterns. The technique of adding sub-codes was crucial to attaining this objective. Subcodes are a "second-order tag assigned after a primary code to detail or enrich the entry" as a way of maintaining "specificity" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 61). Saldana (2013) proposes subcoding as particularly apt for ethnographic studies with multiple participants and sites. The value of the analysis is evident from the ways in which it helps captures the participants' varied descriptions of their selves and enables the identification of patterns. An example of the primary code assigned to the participants' references to themselves was *Self as*, and Figure 6 presents some of the subcodes assigned to this primary code.

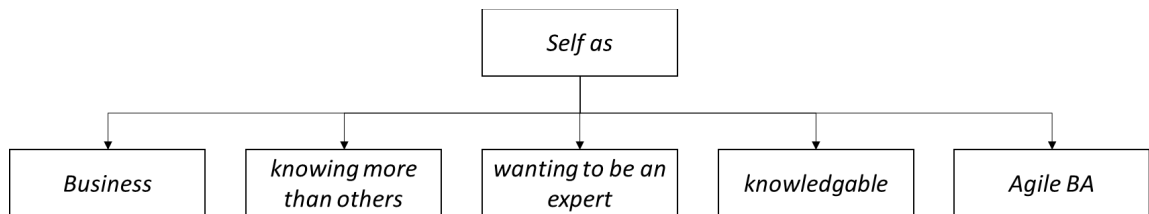


Figure 6. Subcodes used in analysis

In this phase, 14 clusters of primary codes were formed, with a total of 108 subcodes split across those. The primary codes thus, formed with the number of subcodes within brackets are as follows – *Self as (15)*, *Gaps (7)*, *Knowledge (14)*, *Agile (14)*, *Performance (1)*, *others (15)*, *Teams (4)*, *Right thing (7)*, *Nature of work (4)*,

Positioning and Impelling others (14), Aegis (5), Change (3), Systems, projects and processes (2), Negotiation of meaning (3).

The second part of this phase of coding was the identification of codeable moments³⁶. These codeable moments are excerpts in the data that stand out for the information it surfaces about the participant, phenomena or setting under examination (Saldana, 2013, Charmaz, 2014). These moments have the potential to not only support certain assertions or theories but also to at times become the focal point of analysis by lending coherence and meaning to disconnected codes and alerting the author to other possibilities of insights (Charmaz, 2014, Saldana, 2013). This process helped in the further organisation of subcodes under primary codes, and most importantly, it helped in the identification of patterns by shaping and legitimising the author's interpretations. Several of these codeable moments are cited in the findings. However, the author does not want to imply that these moments were found in the accounts of all participants. These instances in the data are precious for their insights and rarity in occurrence.

6.5.3 Third phase: Focused coding

The last and final phase of coding and analysis involved focused coding. This entailed focusing on primary codes that had significant theoretical implications upon the research objectives (Charmaz, 2014). As a result, the codes that emerged to be less significant or inadequate were set aside, interrelationships between different codes identified and certain primary codes were nestled under others. This process is described in Figure 7 below.

³⁶ Referred to by Charmaz (2014) as 'identifiable moments'.

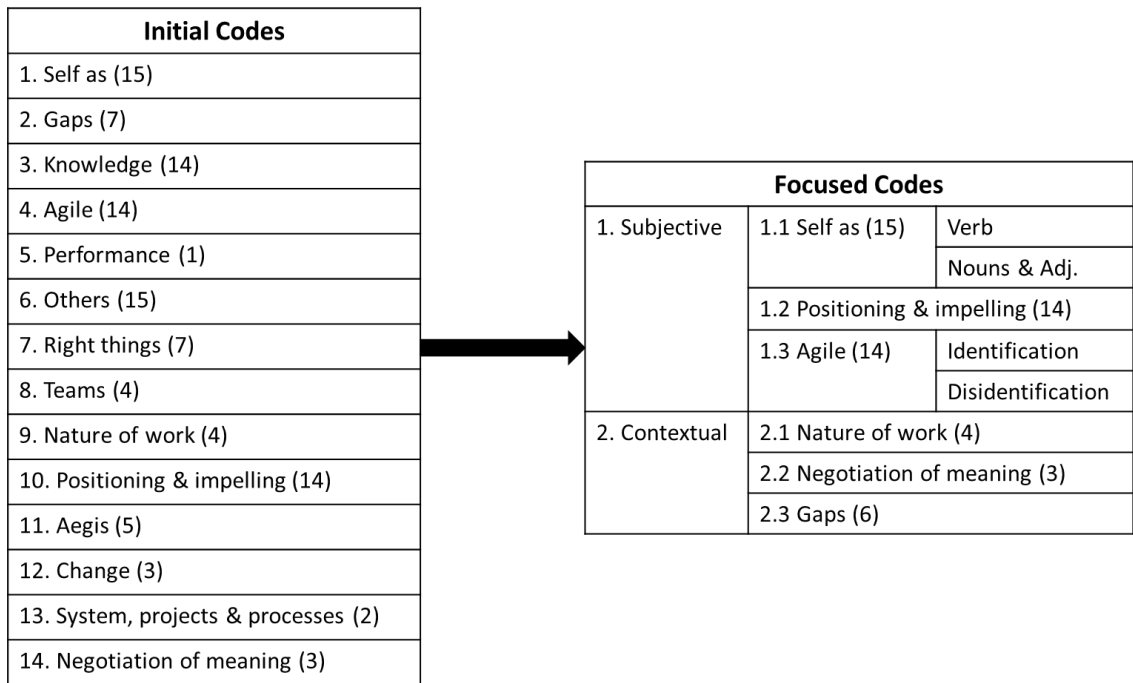


Figure 7. Derivation of Focused Codes from Initial Codes

The codes were categorised under two headings - Subjective (that included primary code clusters of *Self as*, *Positioning and Impelling others* and *Agile*) and Contextual (that included primary code clusters of *Nature of work*, *Negotiation of meaning*, and *Gaps*). The code cluster of *others* was nestled under *Positioning and Impelling others*. *Knowledge*, *Right Thing*, *Teams* and *Aegis* were nestled under *Self as*. *Systems, projects and processes* were integrated with *Gaps*. The code clusters of *Performance* and *Change* were omitted. The code cluster of *Change*, in particular, was omitted as in the process of focused coding, it was found that the participants' references to the aspect of organisational change and the struggles inherent in it were translated in terms of being or not being Agile. Therefore, the codes classified as *Change* were found to be less significant in terms of the impact those had on enhancing the understanding of

the participants' subjectivity or their context. This is also evident from the sparsity of codes comprising this cluster in the second phase of coding (ref. Figure 7).

The *Subjective* category encompassed code clusters that indicated the participants' position in relation to Agile, the context, relational others and the organisation at large. In the course of the analysis, the primary code cluster of *Self as* was further divided into two parts based on the participants' description of self through verbs or nouns and adjectives. This classification of the primary code helped in identifying how the participants' perceived themselves (through nouns and adjectives) and what they were striving for (through verbs) while also surfacing the nuanced interrelationship between the two classifications. In a similar way, the primary code of *Agile* was segmented in terms of participants' identification or disidentification with it. The *Contextual* category captured codes pertaining to the nature of work, challenges that were faced across the project in terms of unsolved problems (*negotiation of meaning*) and varied gaps such as information, resources and other aspects. The validity of these code categories and selection of primary codes were then tested through a comparison with their suitability for the codeable moments identified in the previous phase.

Focused Codes		Theory-based Codes
1. Subjective	1.1 Self as (15)	want-to-be (knowledge, master signifier, Other), self as desire/absence of want-to-be, <i>a-S₁</i> , self as knowledge, absence of <i>a</i> , absence of want-to-be
	1.2 Positioning & impelling (14)	desire for an other, Other as other(s), other against Other, others for Other, signifying (self/master signifier/ knowledge/Other)to/against others
	1.3 Agile (14)	master signifier for Other, master signifier as Other, absence in master signifier (desire/knowledge), master signifier as (other/desire)
2. Contextual	2.1 Nature of work (4)	signification, knowledge, want-to-be, Other, master signifier, absence (Other/master signifier/other/self/knowledge)
	2.2 Negotiation of meaning (3)	
	2.3 Gaps (6)	

Table 3. Application of theory-based codes to focused codes

In the final stage of analysis, the author assigned theory-based codes to each category of focused code for every participant, as has been demonstrated in Table 3. The more prominent codes assigned were those of – the master signifier, Other, others, desire, lack, knowledge, fragmented *selves* (*a*, S_1 , *want-to-be*) and signification. Subcodes were again used in this case to add detail to the main codes and are represented in the table within brackets. The next section details how these codes were further built upon to develop the findings of this thesis.

6.5.4 Description of findings

The analysis of the three primary codes under the category of *Subjective* and its theory-based codes (ref. Table 3) for each participant led to identification of patterns in the ways the participants strove for a certain sense of self in relation to others and to the dictates of Agile. This process is demonstrated below in Table 4, which captures the different patterns of this subjective pursuit through configurations of the different theory-based codes. These configurations are further classified under three categories that are further elaborated upon below.

Theory-based codes to categorisation of Findings	
Forming an Agile self	Self as desire/absence of <i>want-to-be</i> + knowledge (master signifier) + master signifier as Other + others against Other
	Self as desire/absence of <i>want-to-be</i> + knowledge (Other) + absence (knowledge) in master signifier + signifying (knowledge) to others
	Want-to-be + knowledge (master signifier) + master signifier as Other + signifying (knowledge) to others
	Want-to-be + absence (other) in master signifier + desire for Other as an other
Lack-of-being Agile	$a - S_1$ + <i>want-to-be</i> + absence(desire & other) in master signifier + desire for Other as an other
	Want-to-be + knowledge (Other) + master signifier as other + others against Other + signification against others
	Want-to-be + knowledge (Other) + absence in master signifier (Other)/fantasy of Other + signifying (Other) to others
	Want-to-be + knowledge (master signifier) + master signifier as Other + signifying (master signifier) to others
Self in Agile	Want-to-be + knowledge (lack in Other) + absence (O/others) in master signifier + signifying (knowledge-desire) to others for Other

Table 4. Formulation of Findings

The categories represented in Table 4 capture different configurations of the participants' fragmented *selves*, their significations of the master signifier (embedded in the dialectics of lack and desire), and their relationships with the O/others. *Forming an Agile self* focuses on the fantasy-induced appeal of adopting the ways of Agile, whereby the participants are either led by the perception of themselves as knowers of Agile or by their desire to know Agile. Such subjection to the master signifier leads to different and complex ways of positioning the *self* intersubjectively through signification of knowledge to others by positioning others against what the organisational Other wants.

Lack-of-being Agile focuses on how the lack and symbolic absences in the *Agilised* symbolic cluster of the project shapes the pursuits of the participants to be a desired self. On one end, this manifests as the absence of an other, who can enable the participant to navigate the symbolic oeuvre and signify the master signifier. Thus, also pointing to a void in Lacan's typology of discourse. On the other end, it surfaces the participant's approach in signifying themselves as what the master signifier and even the

Other lacks. This unpacks the intricacies of identification with the master signifier as the privileged signifier of the Other. This encompasses the participants' attempts at replacing the master signifier or making it subservient to themselves towards being the Other's object of desire.

Lastly, *Self in Agile* looks at how the participants pursue a sense of self by aligning their desires with that of the master signifier and of the O/others. As can be seen in Table 4, this category represents an alignment of the participants' desire to *be* for the Other, with the fallacies in the master signifier, knowledge of what the Other lacks (and hence needs) and the void in the knowledge of others. Such alignment of the O/others, with the master signifier and the subject's want-to-be *self*, aligns with the conceptualisation of *otherness* presented in Chapter 5 and is pivotal to the theorisation of emotional autonomy in this thesis.

6.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter presents the epistemological position of this thesis in relation to the Lacanian literature in organisation studies. In doing so, section 6.2 states the alignment of this research within the broader interpretive paradigm without the definitive labels of structuralism, poststructuralism or postfoundationalism and also Critical Management Studies. The section concludes by presenting three methodological considerations that inform the research design for this thesis.

Section 6.3 discusses the appropriateness of the research design for the given context, research objectives and methodological considerations by drawing upon the insights offered by interviews and observation in the Lacanian literature in organization

studies. The distinctive approach to interviews is also discussed with reference to the approach taken by other studies in the literature.

Section 6.4 presents comprehensive details of the different facets of how the research was conducted and factors that influenced it – background of the research, negotiation of access for fieldwork, ethical considerations and the author’s subjectivity. Importantly, this section also provides minute details of how the data was collected and treated. In the final section, the analytical process of the data is presented in detail. This process is divided into three parts of open coding, subcoding and focused coding. The author elaborates the processes by which the codes were refined, redefined and restructured in these phases of coding. Identification of codeable moments was used in the last two phases to both organize and evaluate the validity of the primary code clusters and the subcodes. The section concludes with a presentation of how the two code categories of Subjective and Contextual inform the presentation of findings’ categories in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 7 | *AGILISATION OF AEGIS*

7.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter presents the research context in Aegis by painting a detailed picture of the circumstances in which Agile was introduced and the challenges surrounding the initiation of change in the digital innovation project. The description extends into presenting the varied perspectives to this change and the different impact it had on the project and on the subjectivities of employees by way of reframing their perception of *who they are* (7.3.1) and *what they do* (7.3.2).

7.2 Research context: change, failure and transition

In the year 2012, Aegis had set out with the objective to renew its IT platform for underwriting by buying a market-leading software, Synergy. The organisation was then faced with the challenges of building a selection of its insurance products on the software platform by customising Synergy to its needs. Customisation and development of these insurance products on Synergy were inclusive of designing the specifications of product features, options, pricing and terms and conditions, which further implied the need to make informed decisions about what the policy would offer on Synergy.

This research had studied this project, which was structured as a separate division – pseudo named here as Synergy Development Centre (SDC) – within Aegis with the objective of building Synergy and customising it to the needs of the organisation. SDC had approximately 250 employees, spread across 4 locations internationally, but most of the employees were based out of the site for this research.

The customisation and development of Synergy were founded on a collaborative relationship between the organisation's IT and Change and Underwriting divisions. Additional help was sourced by contracting the services of a multinational IT service company with the objective of gaining experienced Software Developers (SDs) and Software Testers (STs), and Business Analysts (BAs) with experience of working in complex and large-scale projects.

The project at the time was structured along the lines of the Waterfall approach to building software. The approach is based on the compartmentalisation of relationships based on their functions and the segmentation of processes into distinct phases (Ambler and Holitza, 2012, p. 4). The process, as depicted in Figure 8, began with a select few Underwriters preparing the requirements for the insurance products to be built on Synergy as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). These requirements were shared with the IT divisions, which coordinated with Design Architects and consultant(s) from Synergy for creating the design. This design was then relayed to the Software Developers for development. Development was followed by integration with other platforms used for functionalities such as filing of claims. The product was then tested and finally deployed to the end-users.

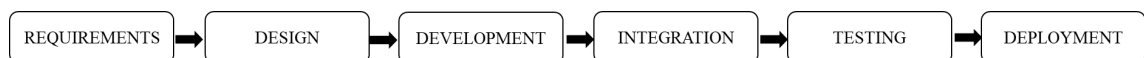


Figure 8. Waterfall Methodology of Software Development

Such a sequential nature of the process had a number of problems. Firstly, the gap in communication between the different phases, such as (Requirements and Development or Design and Integration) impeded the identification of defects earlier in the process and subsequently made the resolution of queries more cumbersome and

added to the confusion. Secondly, this reduced the flexibility and efficiency of the process as problems were not identified until the very end of the process (such as during Integration or Testing). Consequently, it took more time to resolve those problems. This and other concerns led to the project's failure in delivering quality output in time. These inefficiencies in the process made it increasingly apparent to Aegis that they needed to adopt a flexible approach that would accommodate changes and fixes incrementally without stalling the process.

Towards the end of 2014, Aegis sought a way to revive from the failures of the project by adapting a more current methodology for building software – Agile. The research began nearly ten months after this transition and witnessed how SDC was striving to *be* Agile while simultaneously building Synergy. This new phase in the project entailed several changes. At a more apparent level, Aegis terminated the contract with the IT service firm and entered into a collaboration with another organisation, who brought to Aegis their experience and expertise in Agile. A majority of the Software Developers and Testers and Business Analysts were contracted from this new IT service firm, who worked both onshore as well as offshore in India. Some Developers and Testers were also hired from another consultancy firm based in the United Kingdom on a contractual basis.

At a more significant level, the introduction of Agile led to an all-encompassing structural and cultural change in SDC. The next sections will deal with these aspects of structure and culture separately. But before that, it is important to mention why the author chose to begin the introduction to the research context by talking about the past

failures of the project. The reason for that is – despite the project’s moving away from the Waterfall methodology, the signifier was frequently featured in the everyday lives of the participants during meetings or in conversations with the author. Some participants pitched Agile as a ‘*saviour*’ that resurrected the project from the doom of Waterfall, and some warned others of ‘*falling back into Waterfall behaviours*’. Such references to Agile helped in sustaining the fantasy of the signifier as *the* answer to the challenges faced by SDC. However, a few participants, as will be seen in Chapter 8, identified the value of a structured methodology like Waterfall in building something as complex as Synergy, thus positioning Waterfall over Agile. Waterfall was also used by some to alienate job roles of Business Analysts and Project Managers for being non-Agile given their roots in the Waterfall structure. But regardless of these differences in identification with both the methodologies, these significations indicate the inevitable relationality of the signifiers of Agile and Waterfall in the symbolic oeuvre of SDC (Lacan, 2006, p. 235). Furthermore, it also illustrates how identification with one over another is instrumental in positioning the participants and in the participants’ positioning of others (Lacan, 1998f, pp. 42 - 44).

Another important facet of this transitioning to Agile was the contestation of meaning between the different discourses with regards to what it means to be Agile. On the one hand, IT and Change claimed expertise in the technicalities of developing a software system and on Agile as a methodology for software development. On the other, the business division claimed knowledge of how insurance should be re-defined on Synergy and how that could translate into strategic success for Aegis. But Agile, being

the '*chosen method*' for building the system for Aegis and for resurrecting the project from past failures, is intended to answer the crucial question by bringing together the different symbolic clusters and discourses therein (business and IT & Change). This is intended to be attained through an integration of the complex and distinct languages of these divisions into the discourse of one multi-functional team towards ordering knowledge of "...the way things are" (Parker, 2005, p. 170). Such integration of the varied discourses at the level of the symbolic emerges as a complex and ongoing process of interpreting what Agile is in relation to the different divisions and how it needs to be practised to realise the desire for a strategic future for Aegis. Agile thus emerges as a master signifier that offers a fantasy of success and totality and around which subject positions are structured (Bracher, 1993, pp. 23 - 24).

The next section delves into the varied impact introducing and interpreting Agile had on the participants in SDC through the process of what this thesis terms as *Agilisation*. *Agilisation*, in broad strokes, refers to the process of adapting to this change through their struggles at interpreting and signifying what this new fragment of their *self* should be in relation to the Other's demand for change and its privileged signifier, Agile (Stavrakakis, 2008, Essers, Böhm and Contu, 2009). It is important to specify that the symbolic struggles in *Agilisation* are not meant to capture or assume instances of participants' identification with the master signifier. Instead, it encompasses both identification and dis-identification³⁷ towards examining how the participants struggle to

³⁷ The findings presented in the next chapter will present several instances of such dis-identification or partial identification with Agile where the participants anchor their identification in signifiers such as that of the system, insurance, business or Waterfall.

position themselves as “*this or that*” in relation to the new symbolic cluster of Agile inclusive of the presence of O/others (Lacan, 1997d, p. 170, emphasis added).

7.3 Agilisation

The methodology of Agile is not restricted to how the software should be built. But it also extends into defining how job roles should be designed and how the employees should work (Ambler and Holitza, 2012, Agile Alliance, 2019). The first aspect manifests in the way the SDC was structured, and the second aspect shaped how the employees working on the project talked about the work and functioned. In other words, the impact of adapting the methodology had two significant implications for the employees in SDC by impelling them to redefine – *who they are* and *what they do*. The challenge in such a comprehensive adaptation of the methodology lay in the complexity and breadth of the project SDC had undertaken. Therefore, the adaptation of Agile needed to be contingent on the needs of the project and Aegis at large. This ensued perpetual conversations and discursive struggles around what it means to *be Agile* in SDC. It is this contextual and also subjective interpretation and adaptation of Agile that the author refers to as *Agilisation*. In this section, the author builds on the context by describing the process of *Agilisation* as witnessed by her during the research.

Before moving further into the description of *Agilisation*, it is important to mention the role of Aegis’s management as the voice of the master. Represented as Business Owners and stakeholders (these terminologies are defined in Table 5) and referred to by the employees in SDC as the ‘*business*’ - the management insisted on finding a consensual approach to being Agile. The italicisation of business is not only

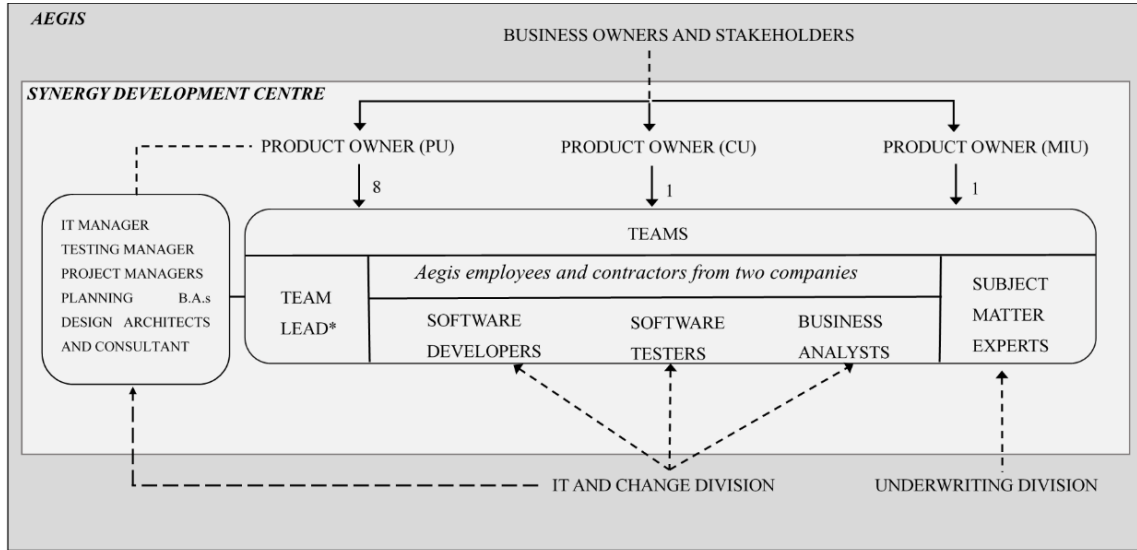
because of its power over SDC but also due to the ambiguity surrounding their entity. Participants (working in technical positions) often referred to the '*business*' in terms of what '*they*' want. But when asked to specify who was being referred to as '*they*', the participants could not point to a specific person or team. The *business* controlled the project through the use of specific signifiers pertaining to the evaluation of target accomplishments, prioritisation of backlog and allocation of resources and products to be built on Synergy. Agile, thereby emerged as the dominant master signifier that mediated the pursuit of building a successful Synergy system that catered to the desires of the *business* – an entity that was signified by its absence within SDC but which shadowed everyday life within the project by imposing its desire to generate income from the system through its perception of effective utilisation of time and resources.

7.3.1 Who they are

For the exploration of who the participants are made to be during this process of change, it is important to describe how relationships were structured and positioned within SDC and how the participants were positioned in relation to the prevalent discourses. This is accomplished through a description of the organisational structure as presented in the figure below and through an examination of the transformation of team structures in the transition from Waterfall to Agile.

Figure 9 depicts the organisational structure of SDC, which was divided into three divisions of Policy Unit (PU), Claims Unit (CU) and Management Information Unit (MIU). Each of these units was headed by a Product Owner, who in turn reported to Business Owners and Stakeholders. These job roles were responsible for the entire

project and had a wider view than the teams, whose perspective was limited to the product they were assigned to develop.



*Only one Team Lead from MIU was a contractor

Figure 9. The Agilised Organisational Structure of Synergy Development Centre

AGILE JOB ROLES	DESCRIPTION
Business Owners	Fund the project and represent the interests and expectations of the organization.
Stakeholders	End users, which in this case are the Underwriters
Product Owners	Represent the interests of the Business Owners to the Agile delivery teams. Responsible for the strategising, planning and prioritising in the project.
Business Analysts (Planning)	Assist the Product Owner in prioritisation of product backlogs. Plan the deployment of products and training of end-users. Coordinate resolution of defects in released functionalities.
Project Managers	Look after the resource-based needs of the teams. Assist the Product Owner in deciding a production and deployment schedule. Manage the deployment of finished functionalities.

Table 5. Description of Agile job roles in the project³⁸

PU – the largest division in SDC – was comprised of eight teams managed by four Team Leads. CU and MIU are comprised of one team each. The teams were spread

³⁸The description of these job roles is based upon Aegis’ in-house Agile training content and is supplemented with reference from Ambler and Holitza (2012).

across different locations within the United Kingdom as well as in India. The CU was dispersed across different locations in the country, whereas the MIU was mostly located in the research site, with a few contractors working from a remote location. The structure also included a range of supporting roles that consulted with and supported all three units and were remnants of the previous Waterfall-based structure. These roles are mentioned on the left-hand side of Figure 9.

The top layer in the structure was comprised of the management executives, including Programme Directors, Stakeholders and the CEO as Business Owner. None of these executives was located within SDC, and contact with them was largely facilitated through teleconferencing. Their distance from the division and the power underlying their positions was seen to result in a certain elusiveness that often emerged in conversations in the form of varying interpretations of what the *business* wants.

It is also important to further define the role of the IT and Change division in SDC. The IT in the 'IT and Change' division were considered to be the flagbearers of Agile for initiating the methodology in SDC. The division was responsible for the technical design and architecture of the software system and also for the training and development of the BAs, SDs and STs. The interspersed presence of IT and Change both within and outside SDC created a parallel reporting structure for the BAs, SDs and STs in the project, as will be described next.

a. Agilisation of discourses

The formation of Agile delivery teams is grounded on two factors derived from the principles of Agile methodology³⁹. First, it gives a prime position to the customer or the end-user in the process of software development (Misra, Kumar and Kumar, 2009, Agile Alliance, 2019). Second, it embraces and even invites uncertainties and changes in requirements along the process (Ambler and Holitza, 2012). To accommodate these changes, both the development and delivery of the product happens incrementally in small parts in re-iterative short cycles of development. These focus-factors are derived from the following two principles in the Agile manifesto (Ambler and Holitza, 2012, p. 9) –

- ~ “Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project.”
- ~ “The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation.”

Both of these factors necessitate a more fluid channel for communication, simplicity in structure and process. Therefore, these principles underlie the basis on which the teams were constituted in SDC as self-organised and multi-functional, as depicted in Figure 10.

³⁹ Such description of Agile is based on SDC’s in-house Agile training content.

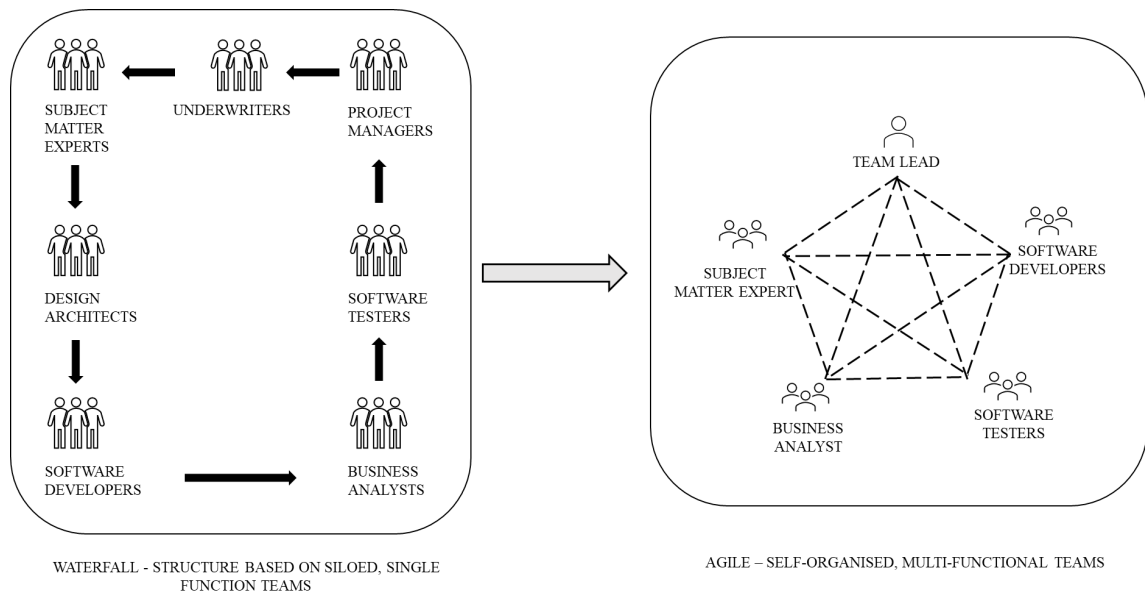


Figure 10. Transformation in the Structure of Teams in SDC

The purpose of this figure is to illustrate the significant transformation in teams' structure during the transition from Waterfall to Agile. In the previous structure, as depicted on the right-hand side of the figure, teams were designed for a single function, and there was very limited scope for contact with other teams. This also led to the danger of them having a very myopic view of the project. The new *Agilised* teams strived to overcome this pitfall by enabling interaction with others such that the members could have some understanding of different parts and facets of the project. It was very common for the POs and TLs to talk about the importance of the team members having an *'end-to-end view'*. However, there were several nuances that surfaced in relation to this change in positions of the participants as Agile team members. But before delving into the subtle implications of this transformation in team structure, it is important to mention a few more details about the composition of the teams with reference to the coming together of Aegis's Software Developers and Testers along with the contractors.

There were usually 3-5 Software Developers and 2-3 Software Testers in a particular team. Most of them were contractors, some of whom worked offshore. In the entire project, there was only a handful of SDs who were employees of Aegis. Many of those were Underwriters who had chosen to be trained as Developers in order to avoid redundancy when Aegis had started to build the first software platform for underwriting in the late 2000s. Interestingly, the Testers were organised under a separate testing subdivision, despite being a part of the team. They had a parallel team and reporting lines, like that of the BAs, who reported to a Change Manager from the IT and Change Division. The only difference in this parallel reporting structure of the STs and BAs was that the Testing Manager was part of SDC and had a significant role to play in dealing with the development and deployment of the software. The Change Managers, on the other hand, were positioned outside SDC (as illustrated in Figure 2) and had little engagement with the project.

In addition, a significant challenge faced by these teams was that their membership was susceptible to frequent changes caused by members being assigned to other teams (both by choice of the employees and by order of the management), contractors joining onsite and going back offshore. In the course of the research, there were as many as five changes in membership within a particular team that the author had followed. This was a pattern that was seen all across SDC. These frequent transitions were all the more problematic given the absence of documentation on how code was written, as Agile does not subscribe to spending time on documentation. The IT and Change division's insistence on following this maxim led to problems when the SDs and

STs had to spend their time understanding the code written by another person, and this, in turn, held them back from progressing in their work.

b. Fragmentation and Agilisation of self

The transformation in structure from single-function teams to multifunctional, independent teams, as depicted in Figure 3, had a number of implications on employees in SDC. Firstly, this impelled employees (in different roles) to directly engage in communication with others instead of having the interaction mediated by Business Analysts or managers. This further had the challenge of engaging in the complexity of the different languages of underwriting used by SMEs and of technical language used by SDs and STs. Subsequently, this led to significant struggles that entailed challenges in both speaking to and understanding the other. Adding to this complexity was the aspect of cultural difference involved in working with contractors from different countries. Several references to this absence of understanding emerged during the fieldwork (as will also be seen in the findings), and participants often referenced it in a tone mixed with frustration and humour as '*gobbledegook*' or as the challenge of translating '*jargon to English*'.

Secondly, *Agilisation* altered the job description of the technical workers (SDs and STs). As members of Agile teams, they were expected to not only develop and test the software but also seek information, actively engage in problem-solving and help others. It had the implication for the participants to strive and overcome their reticence and be more proactive. This struggle entailed a fragmentation of their *self* as someone

who develops or tests and someone who actively communicates with others, and a negotiation of these fragments to align with their desires.

Another crucial and interesting aspect of this emerged in relation to the role of the Team Lead (TL). The teams, in principle, were formed as egalitarian structures, and the TL was positioned as a servant leader and facilitator “with no authority over teams”⁴⁰ but as responsible for enabling the team to achieve the targeted output by ensuring that it has the necessary resources and information⁴¹. The TL was also responsible for aligning the team to the Agile principles and was accountable for their performance. This contradiction of being a facilitator and yet being responsible for the team members’ performance impelled the TL to assume a more authoritative role than was implied with the underpinnings of a servant leader (this will be explored further with reference to the accounts of TL III in subsection 8.3.2).

c. Contestation of Agile vs non-Agile self

The participants’ exploration of who they were during *Agilisation* was embedded in how they were positioned in the discursive network of social relations within SDC. One instance of this was seen with reference to roles that are not typically Agile, namely that of the Business Analyst (BA). The role of a BA was considered to be redundant in Agile on account of the principle of Agile team members directly communicating with one another. However, the management in Aegis had retained the BA in teams as a mediator between the Software Developers and Subject Matter Experts and other

⁴⁰ Quoted from the description of Team Leads in Aegis’ in-house training content.

⁴¹ The description of job roles is based on the information available from Aegis’s in-house Agile training content.

peripheral divisions (such as Finance and Policy Wording). This was to ensure that adequate and accurate information was provided to the Software Developers as a measure for minimising flaws and enabling pace. This *Agilisation* of a Waterfall based structure (as depicted in Figure 9) resulted in varied ways of signifying Agile as a signifier and created the possibility to signify certain subject positions as less or more Agile than others. More importantly, it onset a subjective struggle for the BAs to interpret what it means to be an *Agile* BA. (This will be evidenced in the accounts of BAs III, IV, V and VI in the next chapter.) But for now, the author would like to draw attention to the impact such multiplicity of roots in different divisions had on the participants.

As mentioned above, the BAs belonged to the IT and Change division of Aegis that was outside the realms of SDC with a separate Change Manager, who was responsible for their management and development. Parallely, they were also managed by their own Team Lead and the Product Owner (in the case of Planning BAs) in their daily work life. Such multiplicity in discursive positions across SDC and Aegis at large is indicative of fragmentation of *selves* and points to the need to examine how these different subject positions are coped with by the participant in the seeking and articulating of a distinct sense of self. During the research, the struggle in coping with these fragmented *selves* manifested as challenges in making sense to the other by either imbibing their language (arising from the other's own localised symbolic cluster) or as frustration over the other's inability to understand (this is particularly evident in the case of SD III in subsection 8.2.2).

With this description of the factors underlying the participants' redefining of *who they are* in subjection to Agile, this chapter now progresses into the ways in which *Agilisation* impacted the participants' work.

7.3.2 What they do

The manner of working in SDC was dominated by the use of Agile ceremonies and terminologies. Therefore, before delving into the nuances of how it shaped the participants' work, it is important to understand the entire framework of *Agilised* processes and practices prevalent in SDC.

The principle underlying the designing of Agile processes is the importance of working in small and incremental batches by dividing the product to be built into small stories that are built during a repetitive cycle of sprints lasting for a period of two weeks. These stories are derived from an epic that contains comprehensive details of the requirements of the insurance product and the associated technical necessities. After a set of two sprints, the built products are released to the end-users in SDC. The entire process ranging from the creation of epics to the deployment of finished products to the Underwriters, is depicted in the figure below.

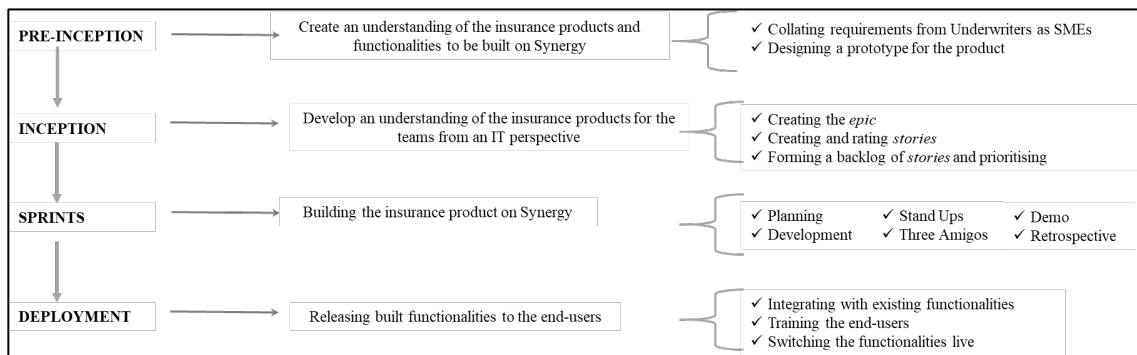


Figure 11. Agilisation of Processes in Synergy Development Centre

The process of Pre-inception is an instance of *Agilisation* as the prescribed Agile methodology begins only with Inception. The need for the former *Agilised* ceremony was founded on the problems that the project was repeatedly encountering on account of flawed re-defining of the insurance products on Synergy. The ceremony was thus, designed to bridge the gaps in communication between SDC and Underwriters through the creation of a shared language through the visualisation of a prototype that explained how the product would appear on Synergy. The ceremony took place across two to three days. During the sessions, selected Underwriters communicated the functionalities and specifications of the insurance product to the concerned Business Analysts (one planning and another Team BA), Design Architects and a Consultant from Synergy.

The second process of Inception was based upon determining how the product could be built. During Inception, the BAs and the Design Architects assimilated the requirements and built the design and the epic. This was followed by another two to three days long sessions during which the design and the epic were explained to the team. Stories were then formed by breaking down the epic into small manageable pieces of work. Consideration was given to the complexity of the task and the effort and time necessary for doing it from both the perspectives of development and testing. It also involved considerations about requirements for additional information and the possibilities of mobilising the existing capabilities of the system. Based on these factors, the *stories* were assigned points, on a scale of 1 to 10, to signify how much effort was required for building each one of those. These stories together formed a backlog from which the teams prioritised the stories to be built based on the *business*' needs and

availability of resources. Thus, prioritisation served as the link between the *business* and the teams and also reflected the influence of the *business* on how the Agile methodology was implemented in SDC.

A crucial challenge to the rating of stories was the difficulty of estimating the complexity of the story based on a preliminary knowledge of the task. The teams often faced two challenges that arose from the lack of a comprehensive understanding of what the stories entailed. Firstly, they found during development that the stories were not broken down far enough and would require more time to build than anticipated. Secondly, often the stories had external dependencies. This meant that the teams had to rely upon other associated divisions such as those dealing with finance, policy wordings etc. These divisions lay outside SDC and were not subject to the temporal demands of Agile. As a result, the teams were often not fed the right information from these divisions in a timely manner. These delays in the development of the stories also implied that simultaneous testing was not feasible, and the STs had to wait till the later part of the Sprint to do their work.

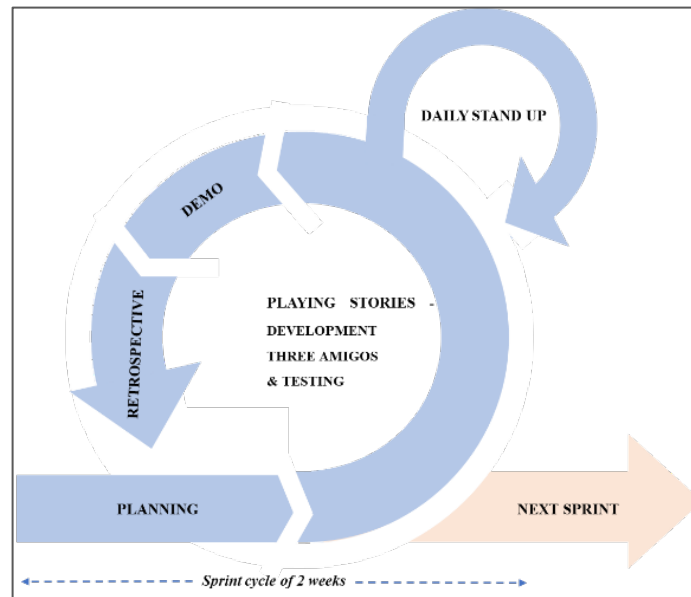


Figure 12. Sprint Cycle

The development of the product by the Agile delivery teams during the Sprints comprised a different set of ceremonies – Daily Stand Ups, Three Amigos and Retrospectives as depicted in the portrayal of the sprint cycle in Figure 12.

The Sprint began with a planning session, wherein the SDs and STs picked *stories* to work on and discussed the requirements. The points of the *stories* chosen were communicated to the PO as the target for that sprint. The *playing of stories* (a phrase commonly used in Aegis) had the following three key aspects –

- i. the development of stories by the SDs
- ii. assimilation of information by the BA and SME(s) to ensure that the STs have all the requisite information to test the built functionalities and
- iii. the testing of stories by the STs.

The following subsections delve into the Agile ceremonies depicted in Figure 12 and the impact those had on what the participants did.

a. Acting Agile while Agilising

Two Agile ceremonies facilitating the *playing of stories* were the daily Stand Ups and Three Amigos. The Stand Ups took place every morning with all the team members from different locations. The purpose of this ceremony was to update on what each team member was working on and also to raise issues that impacted their work⁴². The role of TL and BAs in these meetings was to address these issues. However, in the study, it was at times found that the team members did not raise such impeding issues in a timely manner, and this had an impact on the team's performance in the Sprint. This was an instance of the members' struggles to be a certain *self* by indicating the gap in the team member's expected *Agilised self* – who is vocal about her work and is adept at foreseeing problems and communicating those – and her *non-Agilised self*. Adding to this struggle was the absence of a shared understanding within the team. During the ceremony, updates were provided only by using the number assigned to each *story*. Without the task description, members often did not realise what their colleagues were working on and if it had a bearing on what they were doing⁴³. The author found these subtle issues to be symptomatic of the lack in the fantasy of Agile that promised a way to enable efficient communication and collaboration. And the identification of lack paved the way for examining how the participants were afflicted by these symbolic voids and the ways in which they strived to cope with those.

⁴² Separate Stand – Ups were held at the project level wherein the TLs and BAs from the teams provided updates to the PO, Project Managers and Planning BAs.

⁴³ This issue was also raised by BA IV (as is discussed in section 8.2 in the next chapter) and SD VII and ST I during interviews.

Another interesting conversation that often surrounded these Stand Ups was about the duration of these Stand Ups. The methodology suggests that the ceremony should last between 5 to 15 minutes (Ambler and Holitza, 2012)⁴⁴. In SDC, however, the Stand Ups frequently extended up to 30 minutes on account of discussing issues that were holding the team up. At times it was also because some members were not succinct enough in their updates. This complaint about the duration of the ceremony was another instance of the constant contestation between what was and was not Agile.

b. Integrating the non-Agile in Agilisation

Three Amigos were knowledge-exchange sessions between the SME(s) and STs, organised and mediated by the BA. These sessions often did not have a scheduled occurrence and were held based on the needs of the *stories* being *played* in the Sprint. The objective of these sessions was to enable a clear understanding of requirements from an underwriting perspective, which helps the STs test the functionalities more effectively. In strict Agile terms, the ceremony was designed more as a brainstorming session to figure out how the system should be built between the PO/TL, SDs and STs (Dinwiddie, 2011). But this differentiated approach of SDC to customise this ceremony as a knowledge-sharing session between the BA, SMEs, and STs is an instance of SDC's *Agilisation* to meet its specific contextual needs. Besides creating a different cluster of communications between the STs, SMEs and BAs, this also had the effect of positioning the BA as a mediator who had control over how information is generated and shared in this interaction. Aside from the inevitable debate of such indirect communication

⁴⁴ Also as per Aegis' in-house Agile training material.

between members being non-Agile, this positioning of the BAs impelled the participants inhabiting this role of a mediator to signify it subjectively in keeping with their other *selves*, knowledge and desires. This is dealt with extensively with references to BAs III and IV in Chapter 8.

c. Agilising the lack in Agile

The completion of development and testing was followed by a demonstration of the finished functionalities to the PO, PMs and Planning BAs. Thereafter, the Sprint concluded with an Agile ceremony called Retrospectives. During this ceremony, the team focused on the learnings derived from the two-week iteration. Facilitated by the TL, these sessions required each member of the team to talk about enablers, disablers and anticipated risks during the Sprint. These Retrospectives also took place at the level of the TLs, PMs, BAs and PO. The objective of this ceremony was to identify roadblocks and find a way to resolve those, and learn from mistakes.

In the observation of the Retrospectives, the author had found that the enablers in most cases were identified as teamwork and good communication. However, the disablers pertaining to external dependencies, rating of stories, frequent transitions of members across teams and lack of documentation were repeated consistently in the Retrospectives across Teams I, II and III during the course of the study. It emerged as a systemic problem without a sustainable way approach to resolve it. As a result of this, a few times, the Retrospectives had a very tense undertone. The significance of this ceremony for this study lies in its impelling the participants to signify the lack that

evades symbolisation, and the inability to articulate or address the perpetual void represents the fallacies of the fantasised Agile and the subsequent *Agilisation* by Aegis.

With such a description of how *Agilisation* shaped the participants' perceptions of who they were and what they can and ought to do, the thesis now progresses into identifying the different identificatory patterns and struggles surrounding this process of *Agilisation* that capture the participants to strive for subjective positions in relation to the master signifier. These subject positions are found to be an outcome of the participants' struggle to configure an alignment with their fragmented *selves*, knowledge, desires (for the O/others) and the master signifier. At this conclusion of the description of the context in SDC, if the reader finds scant reference to Synergy and a predominance of Agile-related signifiers, then the author would like to affirm that impression. During the four-month-long study of SDC, the author had found a predominance of signifiers relating to the symbolic cluster of Agile and of insurance. This negotiation of *Agilisation* and its suitability for Aegis' insurance business had ironically relegated signifiers pertaining to Synergy in conversations, meetings, interviews with the author and in symbolic representations (posters) across SDC.

CHAPTER 8 | FINDINGS: *AGILISATION* OF EMPLOYEES

8.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter presents a description of the empirical content of this study by delving into the participants' subjective struggles at *Agilising*. The findings are categorised into three categories, presented as individual sections in this chapter, with each surfacing different facets of the same pattern of *Agilisation*. Section 8.2 presents the first category of findings, *forming an Agile self*, examines the complexities of articulating a new sense of self for the participants beyond the inevitable identification with the master signifier and unpacks the impact the fantasy of Agile has on the participants. Section 8.3, *lack-of-being Agile*, looks into the limits of this fantasy, which fails to accommodate what the participants perceive to know and want. As a result, they are either driven to symbolically identify with an alternate sense of self, which varies from the subjects of Agile and yet are limited in their reach to symbolic authority over others. Section 8.4, *the self in Agile*, presents the participants' ability to fill the perceived absences and lacks in Agile by presenting a sense of self that fills in for the flaws of the master signifier by addressing the need of O/others. This last section is exclusive for the participants' awareness of what the organisational Other, the master signifier, and by implication, the others are lacking. Thus, exemplifying the knowledge of *otherness* and the pursuit to *think* – aspects that this study considers to be conducive to the desire for emotional autonomy.

8.2 Forming an Agile *self*

The process of *Agilisation* implicit with the creation of a sense of self as working in a new symbolic cluster is in some cases seen as the participants buying into the fantasy of Agile being the right approach (Bracher, 1993, pp. 46 - 47). The first subsection (8.2.1) presents different facets of this fantasy-induced identification with the master signifier and its impact on the participant's articulation of *self*. The next subsection (8.2.2) delves into the participants' accounts of desiring an *Agilised self* and their struggles in pursuing that desire through signification despite their subjection to the fantasy of the master signifier.

8.2.1 *The Agilised self*

The narrative of initiating SDC into Agile began with the IT division (within IT and Change). In their position of convincing the *business* to invest in the project and of recommending the initiation of Agile as a remedy for past failures, the IT manager claimed knowledge of both Synergy and Agile. The underlying implication of this claim was that not only do they know what Aegis wants but also know how to deliver it. The presence of Synergy and Agile within IT's domain of signifiers was met with the absence of the other such as the *business*. Such relegation resulted in attempts of marrying Agile with the discursive structure of SDC through the subordination of all that was not IT. A good example of this was found in the case of the Senior IT Manager (ITM), who had a pivotal role in bringing forth the idea of both Synergy and Agile into Aegis. He also managed the IT Designers, Software Developers and Software Testers and, therefore, had a position of considerable authority within the project. His account of

how SDC came to be was based upon the assumed naivety of the *business* vis-à-vis his (as a representative of IT) ability to understand and deal with complexities.

“Again, the history there is, we spent so long to persuade the business (management) to let us do this project (Synergy) and when they said yes, it was typical. As soon as they said yes and said we want it tomorrow. Hang on; there are a few things we need to get some things in place first. So, we need to have Systems Integrator (technical contractors)...bring in-house Developers team, use some additional Synergy resource and go Agile at the same time. Otherwise, this project in other guises has failed many times, generally due to Waterfall behaviour. But that is not what we want anymore. Especially because it is a complex project and there are so many different business customers. Not allowed to say customers anymore; so many different aspects of the business...it’s failed in the past but mostly because of people moving in and out and requirements constantly changing.”

(ITM: 1)

This excerpt is significant for the implicit struggle between the participant’s *self* prior to the advent of the Agile – that tended to identify the *business* as “customers” and not partners – and his *Agilising* self – that knew all about Agile. The shifts between these two fragments of his *self* and the struggle to be *Agilised* as the knower of what it means to be Agile led him to position the IT and *business* in respective positions of master of and novice to the master signifier. These mutual positionings of the self and others (Ekman, 2013, Kenny, 2012) are based upon the participant’s efforts at

converging the language of his knowledge with that of others. And given his identification with himself as a cause behind the introduction of the master signifier, he struggled to assume the role of a master and his significations insisted upon unquestioned acceptance by others.

In the account, ITM claimed to have a vision for Aegis and to the knowledge that could manifest the vision through Agile and demonstrated the practical awareness needed for mapping the right resources. The *business*, on the other hand, was presented as a naive “*customer*” – an outsider to this knowledge – who needed to be explained and told what to do. It was also deemed unaware of what it wants and that it was their “*constantly changing*” requirements from the system that had led to failures in the past. Such dynamic between the knower versus the ignorant is also characteristic of the relationship between the two divisions in general. But in this instance, it led to the complexity of his desire to lead within SDC by telling the *business* what to do and expecting the latter to submit to his decisions. Ironically, however, such claims to mastership over the *business* was denied to him by Agile itself. The egalitarian structure of an Agile project accommodates only one formalised position of a master in the Product Owner, who inevitably is from the *business* given the requirements of the role (Ambler and Holitza, 2012, p. 12).

ITM’s approach to the imperfections in Agile is also interesting to the analysis of his fantasised perception of the master signifier. In the excerpt, he attributes the failure of previous projects to the changing of *business*’ requirements and to the frequent transitioning of people working on the project. One of the principal reasons for adopting

Agile was to allow flexibility for changing requirements (ref. section 7.2). And the project still dealt with the challenge of people transitioning between teams and projects (ref. subsection 7.3.1a). ITM's recognition of the persistence of these challenges is also a reflection of his being blind to the lack in Agile, which results in the projection of that failure onto others – the *business* (Bracher, 1993, p. 162).

As the author probed further, ITM's failed desire for mastership over the clueless *business* surfaced more strongly; this time by drawing reference to how “*strange*” Agile was to them.

“Everyone sees the benefit of Agile really quickly and gets behind it. I think we built...one line of business, and within two days, we had something to show. And everyone was like – ‘Wow! Is this what Agile is. And I said absolutely, that is what it stands for. And then people go back to their desks, and all the wrong behaviours come in. And I understand if you have been used to Waterfall all your life, Agile is strange...So a good example, you have seen the poker planning process...everyone who works in a team will look at it together, and they will size a story...The idea then is to trigger a conversation – why have you got 10 points and I have got 2, and the details start to come up at the end of it you have got a quality product... So, we have got behaviours where people say, ‘oh, that is childish, we don’t need to play this.’ So, we have got to explain to them and say this is why it happens so that we can have good conversations...we are a million miles away from there (Minimum Viable Product) in Aegis...we are building very

Rolls Royce solution, when actually what we need is a simple Minimum Viable Product (MVP) to move on.”

(ITM: 1)

The participant's signification of himself as the master was further challenged and complicated by the *business'* inability to comprehend Agile the way he did. The latter's failure to understand “*a simple Minimum Viable Product*” and seeking a “*Rolls Royce solution*” impelled the participant to repeatedly explain to the naïve *business* what “*Agile stands for*” – a way to deliver quick results and to initiate “*good conversations.*” Such foreignness of Agile for *business* was attributed to being used to a “*Waterfall*” approach by ITM, as he accused them of not being able to adapt the language of Agile (by rating stories in a planning poker) and of being set in their old-failing ways.

The picture painted by the ITM here is very much like the tale of his expertise (of Agile) driving the organisation towards a strategic future while dealing with the *business'* ignorance and leading them to the right way of being Agile. The *business*, therefore, was positioned as an ‘other,’ who was not Agile and hence needed to be moulded to attain the desire for Aegis' success, as envisioned by him. This tendency was not exclusive to ITM and was also seen in PM I, who sought to subordinate the “*non – IT professionals*” to the knowledge and experience of the IT professionals. Having worked with the organisation for about two decades in project management-based roles, PM I was brought into SDC after the coming together of the IT & Change Management divisions of the organisation. Despite being in a position that was not formally

recognised by the Agile prescribed structure, the participant was subjected to its dictates, and he found a route into identifying with it through IT.

The author had witnessed in meetings that the participant often had disagreements with PO II, BAs and the SMEs over aspects of utilisation of resources and capabilities in the teams, allocation of work, schedule for releases and prioritisation of defects resolution. This discursive struggle between IT and the *business* led the participant to signify the priorities for SDC in terms of technical needs and resources.

“We have got priorities from the business, build these functionalities first and then within that we will go well we will need to build the screens before we can build the ratings because there is a technical priority there. So, we are not always building the business’ highest value first, but we are trying to enable the highest business value as soon as possible, which may mean we do other things in order to enable this as well.” (PM I: 1)

This excerpt indicates that the *business’* need for certain functionalities, which can be deployed and operated to create value, were made subservient to the technical feasibilities estimated by PM I based on his understanding of the system. The high claim of IT for the participant was established by being in the position to “*enable the highest business value,*” as substantiated by his perceived indispensability of IT for the *business*. A consequence of such positioning of his *self* (as part of the IT and Change division) vis a vis the *business* resulted in the participant’s approach to doing things differently and re-signifying priorities for the project.

“So, if we say we are going to manage work in an Agile way, that means anybody who can’t work in an Agile way needs to step back and let the others do it...and not get in the way and just accept...But what we get is quite a lot of people, for example, like the PO ⁴⁵ go – why do we do it this way? Because we are Agile, we are doing it this way. It’s not (that) there is one way that is right or wrong, it’s just not the chosen way...non-IT professionals should be really listening to IT professionals going OK that is why you are right, and I have got to accept it...you then need to kind of go – ‘we are not an IT professional and what makes us think that we will make a better decision, better choice than the IT professionals, who have all these years of experience.’”

(PM I: 2)

The participant rivals for the position of “*IT professionals*” as masters, who command with unquestioning authority by dint of knowing what is “*right*.” Such supremacy was exaggerated to the point of positioning their interpretation of Agile as the “*chosen way*.” This also led him to the expectation of unquestioned acceptance by the *business* and of superseding the PO (II) by undermining the need to make sense to him.

The analysis of the accounts of ITM and PM I surface the participants’ identification with an alternative structure that would allow them a position of mastership over the *business* while they retained their exclusivity to Agile. This brings to the fore the imaginary structure of relationships (IT as the master) in the perceptions

⁴⁵ The reference here is to PO II.

of the participants that subsumed the reality for them even as it conflicted with the organisational structure formalised in the Symbolic (Armstrong, 2005). Thus, pointing to the *inactment* of the organisation in a “model internal to oneself, part of one’s inner world, relying upon the inner experiences of (their) interactions, relations and activities...which give rise to images, emotions, values and responses” (Hutton, Bazalgette and Reed, 1997, p. 114).

In the presentation of the accounts of the next participant, TL II, this subsection moves towards examining other manifestations of the *Agilised self*. In this case, the participant's account is characterised by unequivocal devotion to the master signifier, but it lacks the discursive tensions discussed above. Instead, the tensions in this account arise from the participant’s resistance to her *non-Agilised self*.

TL II was the first Team Lead appointed to the project under the Agile methodology. The participant was likely to have seen the challenges of the project’s gestation in those early days of transitioning, having been in that role from the beginning. However, her accounts were bereft of any such struggles and were almost idyllic. While talking to the author about Agile and the project, the participant only talked about how Agile had made the communication between team members more fluid; and that the principle of building in small pieces incrementally had made the project more efficient. When asked about the challenges relating to people moving in and out of teams and the complexity of the project⁴⁶, the participant directed her

⁴⁶ These were problems that were most commonly associated with the project by participants.

response back to very generalised notions of “*having good communication*” and “*calling out issues*” (TL II: 1).

The author initially took TL II’s guarded responses for her reticence to be frank with an outsider. But over the period of the study, the participant’s ‘by the book’ approach to Agile manifested in other ways too. First, TL II’s understanding of her role was aligned to the description of “*facilitating effective Agile processes...(being) a servant leader with no authority over the team*”⁴⁷. The participant is caught in the symbolic contradiction of leading a team with “*no authority*” and finds a place for herself in being a facilitator. This was exemplified in her passive stance during Stand Ups when she did not assert herself or exercise any influence on occasions of delays or other problems of collaborating with other divisions - challenges that the team faced repeatedly.

Second, the participant only talked about the problems in terms of Agile. For instance, TL II talked about the recurring challenge of coordinating with periphery divisions, such as those responsible for the print layout of the policies, policy-wordings, pricing, etc., in strictly Agile-oriented terms.

“We’ve got so many teams that we need to integrate to get our Print stuff done (and) it’s always going to be a bit of a complex beast. But the collaboration of the Print into the track and into the Stand Ups means that everybody gets collaborative updates about the status of everything. So maybe (we) do not have delays of people not speaking to another person or not knowing what the status

⁴⁷ Quoted from a description of a Team Lead’s role in Aegis’s in-house Agile training content.

of the story is...The rating algorithm that we get from the Pricing team was not in a format that we would have liked it to be in...We've got a lot of that, so (there is going to be a) rating Retrospective just to look at the rating and how it has been...get together just to understand what can be done better for the next lot of work coming in...So the Pricing guys are not as embedded in the track as I would have liked (the SME). I would have liked him to travel up and come and sit with us...(we need) everybody confirming to the concept of a proper Agile team, they would have been fully embedded in the team.” (TL II:2)

The participant, in this excerpt, attempted to fit the complexities into the scheme of Agile through its ceremonies of Stand Ups and Retrospective. The periphery divisions (working on print, policy wording, etc.) were not bound by the temporality of Agile and hence were not liable for working in accordance with a Sprint cycle and the participant's view of including them in the morning Stand Up and having them co-located was a way of addressing this challenge. Even the issue of the rating algorithm not being in the right format was addressed by drawing upon the Agile ceremony of Retrospectives. The participant expressed little incentive to think of ways of addressing this challenge without referring to Agile-related signifiers.

The author found it particularly interesting that the participant made no reference to the problems arising due to the lack of resources in these other divisions – something that was quite commonly flagged by other participants dealing with the same issue. It was a problem that had no answer in Agile, and for the participant intent on seeing

everything from that vantage point, it escaped mention. Instead, an overarching solution is desired through the *Agilisation* of corresponding units that lie outside SDC.

At times, such identification with the Agile signifier also resulted in the participant underplaying the challenges of the situation. An interesting example of this was seen in the event of a complex issue that was encountered by Team II while integrating the policy with the claims functionality on Synergy. The problem was further complicated by the dependence on the Claims Unit within SDC, and solving this problem meant delaying the release of the product by a month. However, the Product Owner (PO II), Project Managers, and the planning BAs were unhappy with the suspected delay and were exerting pressure on the team to deliver in time. The author had spoken to both TL II and the team BA (III) about it. While BA III was concerned about getting the Project Managers and the *business* on board with their decision to delay and make them see the rationale behind it, TL II talked about the problem entirely in terms of, in this case, the theoretical flexibility enabled by Agile.

“Because we have now got monthly deployments, the impact of some issues coming up about what speed you can now deliver is not such a big thing now. So, we are going to target for March...And if we get more delays from Claims and think that we cannot go live in March, then it is only a month until we can go live the next time, depending on how many problems we have. So, it is not such a big issue as the way it was before...because it was going to be 3 months before you could get stuff deployed. It was 3 months that the business (was) losing the capability and the income that could be generated from that. It certainly falls in

line more with the concept of Agile, which is meant to be about small incremental deliveries, and that is what the monthly deliveries kind of give us.”

(TL II: 2)

The description of this issue was centred on Agile’s signification as building in “*small incremental deliveries.*” In doing so, it relegated the intervening signifiers of business value and priorities and took a simplistic view of the delay in delivering the product by a month or more if need be. The participant was led to assume an unequivocal acceptance of the Agile principle by the *business* and the Project Managers, thereby casting an image of all being of the same mind. Such an assumption led to the obvious exclusion of the discourse of the *business* or the Project Management. It also limited the approach of TL II in terms of being critical of existing practices and coming up with *non-Agilised* solutions – an aspect that will be unpacked in detail subsequently in the accounts of BA III (subsection 8.3b). Instead, for the participant, the Agile approach was dubbed as her own, which resulted in unquestioning acceptance of what Agile meant and imposition of the Agile principles on the challenges encountered. Interestingly, the delay partially caused by the Claims Unit was also left untouched by the participant. The Claims Unit also followed the same Agile methodology of working, and looking into that delay would have led TL II to face the lack in Agile that allowed such inefficiencies and delays.

Impelled into existence by Agile as a Team Lead, the participant’s sense of self and perception of situations and her actions were limited by the master signifier (Bracher, 1993, pp. 91 - 92). In complete subjection to the fantasy of this master

signifier, the participant is resigned to its significations and, in turn, comes to symbolise the very insufficiencies of the signifier⁴⁸. The study finds another aspect of such subjection to the fantasy of Agile, which led BA IV to explore a new sense of *Agilised self* without being limited to the dictates of the master signifier.

BA IV was significantly influenced by the master signifier and, like TL II, was driven to create an *Agilised* version of herself as a team-based BA. In this process of identifying with and recreating herself as Agile, the participant re-signified the Agile principles through integration with her personal signifiers, thereby leading to a creative pursuit of the desire to *be* Agile by manifesting what she knows.

BA IV had worked in several Waterfall based projects in her twenty years old career in Aegis, and therefore, working in an Agile-based project was a very different experience for her. Not only did it mean a different way of working but also a different way of being, by now becoming a team member (as was described in section 7.3). This novelty of being part of a team and collaborating informs a renewed perception of what it is to be a BA for the participant, and it is through the signifier of a team that the participant identifies with the master signifier, Agile.

“Beginning of last year, I had been in a team and got asked to help out (with) ...some work in planning for the next phase...and I was only out for six weeks, but I could not wait to come back into a team. I really missed that, being part of a team. All in for the same goal. All (contractors) are great to work with...we are all enthusiastic about it...have a common goal, always help each other...As soon

⁴⁸ This aspect will be further developed in section 8.3.

as I heard one of the teams was looking for a BA, I just moved my desk...it is just getting in there and working with a team, the dynamics that I never had as a Waterfall BA.” (BA IV: 1)

This excerpt has two key implications. First, it surfaces the participant’s idyllic perceptions of all being “*in for the same goal*” and being “*great to work with.*” Much like TL II, BA IV too assumes a certain Agile-induced homogeneity by buying into the fantasy of the master signifier. Second, such identification with Agile channelled through the keen desire to be a part of a team establishes a sense of self for the participant and drives her desire to be a team-based BA. This further manifests in the participant’s efforts to play a parent-like role for the others in her team; this surfaces through her efforts at nourishing them through knowledge sharing, helping them to grow into the skin of their roles⁴⁹, and enculturating newcomers, particularly contractors. Her insistence on having a shared understanding within the team manifests as her concerns with the integration of the contractors working offshore with the team. According to her, the technical glitches in video conferencing, distance and cultural differences create a gulf in meaning, which needs to be addressed. In another interview (BA IV: 2) with the participant, she talked about the need to make sense to others during Stand Ups; when the team members gave updates based on story numbers, it did not help other’s understand what function that number corresponded to (as described in subsection 7.3.2a). Additionally, she also talked about her role as a facilitator in the Three Amigos (a ceremony initiated by her in SDC) that helped create a “*shared understanding*”

⁴⁹ TL III was new to the role and had little experience of managing a team and BA IV had supported him significantly as he learnt on the job.

between the SME and ST with regards to what a particular product or function should do on Synergy.

At one level, the insistence on “*all singing from the same hymn sheet*” (BA IV: 1) is rooted in identification with the need to “work cohesively as a team to be Agile.”⁵⁰ On another level, it manifests the participant’s desire and ability to be a team-based BA, who can extend the fantasy of Agile and enable such cohesion in a team through creative significations of her knowledge. Other than such insistence on creating a team culture based on shared understanding, BA IV identifies with the signifier of knowledge in ways of enabling and influencing its flow within the team.

“Do you know Inception? I quite like that. The BA leads...discussions just to make sure that we have got the backlog in a structured way that makes sense to me and the SME. And this time, what I did was a bit different...we drew 2 or 3 diagrams trying to show how that layered approach works. That is the first time for me where we have done that – a visual way to see how the standard Agile layer of functionalities work, and then you build on top of that...we have got three main groups of functionalities...each of those is one thin layer, one transaction, one territory, one type of currency. Start off with that end to end and then build on top of that...that is just another aspect for you of planning in an Agile way.” (BA IV: 1)

This excerpt establishes BA IV’s perception of her role as an enabler of knowledge within the team. She took it upon herself to simplify and share the

⁵⁰ Quoted from Aegis’ in-house Agile training material.

understanding of how the Agile principle of building incrementally in small pieces could work through visual aids. Therefore, this approach to “*planning in an Agile way*” is her signification of the Agile principles in the process of articulating an *Agilised self*. The inclusion of the others in the team and their need to know is engulfed in BA IV’s “*layered approach*”, and this created the symbolic space for them to interact with and respond to with their own signifiers, as they configured their own *Agilised selves* (as will be seen in the accounts of SD III in the following subsection).

The last account in this subsection looks at the same aspect of signifying a new *Agilised self* by integrating it with other symbolic clusters and impelling others to engage with it. Ordained by the collaborative structure of Agile, the PO signifier is placed at the intersection of both the symbolic clusters of IT & Change and *business*. It is defined by its ability to look over and exchange meanings with both divisions and thus has a normative impact on SDC. The subject position to which the PO signifier points has the undercurrent of power, authority, and control that gives a certain weight to his interpretation of Agile and the way it is deemed to be practised within SDC.

Having joined the project two years ago with the experience of working in Risk Management based roles, it was his first experience of managing an IT-based project. This and his proximity to the stakeholders and the management within Aegis led to the participant’s relegating the discursive influence of IT for not understanding the complexities of managing. For him, therefore, Agile is not a methodology for software development alone but a normative tool for defining *an* approach to work and behaviour in SDC. It also serves as a medium for negotiating meaning with the *business* to gain

legitimacy and validation for his significations of the project. An instance of this is seen on the occasion when a team had fallen short of delivering the targeted points as it had identified a missing clause in the requirements presented for the product by the *business*. The clause being a significant one, then needed to be added to the system, which in turn delayed the completion of that particular product. The stakeholders and the Project Managers were not in favour of the delay in completion, and it was down to PO II to convince them.

“(the clause) was key priority for the business, we identified it as being missed, and it was just that people didn’t know...so key priority let’s get it in, let us get it in quickly...So instead of that being delivered in September, it will now be delivered in October...and then the business comes - well well well, why is there a delay...but building it now is the right thing to do from a long term perspective, and that is more Agile...We are the biggest project doing Agile within Aegis; let us do something different.” (PO II:1)

This excerpt is telling for a number of reasons. The intent of doing “*something different*” is indicative of the participant’s re-defining what is and is not Agile, based on his approach to building the system from a “*long term perspective*” and doing “*the right thing*.” His identification with Agile as a methodology was driven by the desire to signify his own approach, which is done in two ways. First, he identifies with Agile’s signification as enabling flexibility to fulfil what is understood to be a “*key priority*” for the *business*. Second, he signifies this “*priority*” back to the *business* by drawing on the signifiers of what is right strategically. The sanction of the *business* sought through such

clustering of signifiers is achieved by re-defining the temporal aspect of delivering Synergy.

PO II's claims to the validity of doing things differently serve his desire to interpret and signify Agile in a way that aligns with his own sense of self. Such seeking a reflection of his rationale in it is exemplified again when he talks about the flaws in the methodology that feed the tendency to blame others during decision making.

“In terms of making decisions, I think umm, and it is funny because there is talk about Agile and you do not document anything blah blah blah...but I come from a risk and governance background. We talk about informed risk-based decisions, and everybody has got that as an objective. So, what I have tried to introduce is more rigour on that. What will happen is that I would be sitting in a meeting and ‘oh, yeah and last year we sat in a meeting, and we said this blah blah and decided that.’ OK, so did we consider all the angles that went with that? I am not saying it was a wrong decision, but we have got additional information now that would suggest that perhaps we need to look at that decision again. All I have introduced is when we make biggish decisions, let us just have a one-pager. What was the business problem, what were the pros and cons...why have we made the decision we have made, and we have all agreed to it. So, we cannot do the whole finger-pointy thing.”

(PO II: 1)

In this instance, the lack in Agile as a methodology is described in terms of being incompatible with a non-blame-based culture that the participant desires. This gap

between the two is filled by drawing on signifiers from his previous roles. The participant clusters the signifiers of “*risk and governance*” and “*rigour*” to signify the objective of having “*risk-based decisions,*” exclusive of any reference to Agile, through a “*one-pager.*” The document was intended as a mechanism, which defines and differentiates right from wrong decisions and subjects the decision-makers to the fantasy of *agreement*, thus, limiting their ability to blame.

In a nutshell, the quoted instances convey PO II’s reference to Agile as a way of thinking long term, of doing the right thing in a non-blame-oriented culture, and being flawed for the lack of documentation. Such extension in the signification of the term is an attempt to define all that rationalises as an approach to delivering successfully for the participant. The signification is mechanised through the direct association of the *self* with Agile as a signifier and seeking answers to what it can and cannot do for the project in the process of signifying his *Agilised self*.

8.2.2 *Desire for an Agilised self*

While following Team III, the author had the chance to closely follow and interact with SD III, one of the few Aegis’ own Software Developers in SDC, who held an atypical role in the team. Having started his career as an Underwriter, he had worked in the organisation for more than twenty years. The possibility of redundancy had led him to take an opportunity to learn to programme and become a Software Developer within the company.

SD III’s rare and unique ability within SDC to understand both insurance and the technical aspects of the Synergy system, along with his seniority within the organisation,

gave him an edge in terms of relationship management, made him a point of reference for many. Particularly for the contractors within the team, who approached him for problem-solving, SD III advised on how to get things done, who to approach and how. He was also designated as an adviser for the entire project in functionalities relating to Premium Evaluation (PE). These different aspects of the role resulted in him taking an almost coach-like role for the contractors within the team and for other teams or individuals dealing with issues relating to PE. The participant, therefore, was caught between adorning the explicit signifiers of Software Developer and adviser and the implicit signifiers of an ex-Underwriter and an informal coach to the contractors (ref. subsection 7.3.1b). And Agile, within SDC, could go only so far as to identify him with an ideal team member, who is “responsible for ALL work” (emphasis in original).⁵¹ But being this ideal Agile team member brought little satisfaction to the participant. He shared his frustrations with the constraints on his time, which stopped him from being a Software Developer in the sense of writing new codes and creating prototypes. Instead, he found himself mostly “*cleaning after other people’s mess*” (SD III: 1) as an adviser.

The pursuit of creative satisfaction had led him to switch teams and work on something that he had wanted to try and learn. But donning the many hats of being the ideal Agile team member and adjusting to a new team to do something challenging was not an invigorating experience for him. This led him to long for the coach-like presence that BA IV had offered in his previous team. The following excerpt referred to an incident when the participant had recently moved from Team III to another to build a

⁵¹ Quoted from the description of Team Member is Aegis’ in-house Agile training content.

new product on the system. He had joined the new team after Inception and hence was not part of the initial phase of interpreting what needs to be done and how the work is split and structured into stories.

“The one thing I was disappointed with when I went into this role, you have got a story to deliver, and that’s my story, and it has got 7 or 8 stories, you have not broken it down far enough. I was told if you want to break it down, just go ahead. This should have been done...by the time I actually break the story down and then add on the points; I could be talking 2 or 3 days of work. So again, that is to me where your Three Amigos sessions or your team as a whole should be trying to break it down to the smallest. What can you deliver in isolation that the business can actually see and sign off...So what I said is what you should have done is taken a comprehensive policy, put one (of each factor)...and build on top of that...We did that for (another product), and it worked really – really well...we ended up with a lot of incremental stories and test-only stories...if you build it out gradually, makes testing harder, but it also means that you can build out and deliver to the business a bit of incremental functionality, which is what Agile is supposed to mean. So, I was a bit miffed in the meeting. If you want to break it all down, but that should have been done as a collective.”

(SD III:2)

The stories here symbolise the difference in the understanding of the task between the participant and the new team he had joined. The reference to “*your Three Amigos sessions or your team as a whole*” indicates a certain distance, which then

manifests in the failure to make sense to the other. The participant's being is rooted in identification with the signifier of shared knowledge, and the absence of which results in a disparity between the collective understanding and that of his own. This is exemplified in this quote about his understanding of how a product should be built incrementally, referring to the "*layered approach*" of BA IV. Excluded from the collective process of interpreting and designing what is to be developed during Inception, the participant struggles to signify "*what Agile means*" and to find a place for his previous significations of working in a team in the new setup.

The author would like to focus on this aspect of the discursive lack of a desired other in Agile and the contradictions of being an ideal Agile team member in more detail. This fantasy induced perception of an Agile team member both deluded and isolated SD III and at the same time left him desiring the same cohesion that Agile promised to offer. Another interesting example of this was seen in the participant's insistence on having a standard format for writing stories in the new team, in which he again referred to BA IV's way of doing it. Interestingly, SD III never explicitly mentioned her and only referred to it in terms of how things were done in the previous team.

"Like, last week I thought they would have implemented it; I (had) said that in (Team III) we had a story that you had 16 sub-tasks on, and those 16 sub-tasks covered everything you would need for a story. All the sub-tasks depend on the story (and it) would not be required, but it covered everything, so you could just close the sub-task if it were not applicable...For me, it is the perfect way to work

for everybody across the floor. We should put this template up and use it; you cannot miss something. I have seen that in (Team III), and so I asked if we could create a template so that we can use it for all the stories. That has not been done yet; I asked for that to be done last week. I asked again in the Stand Up this morning because I would not know how to go about VITA to create that.”

(SDIII:2)

On the surface, this excerpt, like the previous one, indicates SD III's struggle in signifying a story to the other. The story here emerges as a signifier from the cluster of Agile, which symbolises a way of building the system well by knowing what needs to be done in a way that the *business* can use it. The story signifier is, therefore, signified by shared understanding and knowledge. But beyond this, there are two key implications in this excerpt. One that, like the previous excerpt, it underlines the participant's desire for an *other* who can offer him a shared language in this new team, which he could then use to signify his knowledge as a Software Developer. This longing for a collective language for sharing knowledge stems from his own inability to do the same and the lack of an *other*. Two, this desire for a common language and an *other*, who can mediate it by signifying Agile, for example, as a “*template*” for a comprehensive story, is but an extension of the fantasy of “all working together”⁵² imposed by the master signifier, Agile.

This dialectic between the desire for a shared language and the void of an *other*, while extending the fantasy of Agile, does not, however, end with the differences in the

⁵² Quoted from the description of Agile Principles in Aegis' in-house Agile training content.

discourse of the two teams. Instead, it points to an absence that goes beyond individual teams and points at SDC at large, which further leads to a failed signification of knowledge to others.

“That is another thing, we have had absolutely no training in VITA at all, but we are expected to use it as a tool, which I find quite poor. I can get into VITA, and I can get around it. But I do not really know much about creating views or any of the other things, and I do not want to be sitting for hours and playing around with it because, to me, that is just a waste of time. If I know what to do or somebody can show me what to do, then great, and I would be able to do it – OK, right, I need it for this. Other than that, I am not too fussed about knowing a lot about it because I do not really feel it is something that will benefit me too much. Rather than doing that, I would rather be doing a code. Some software we might change next week anyway, because who is to say that we will carry on with VITA because it is always down...you cannot look up a story and cannot post an update.” (SD III:2)

VITA, as a project management software, is meant to enable confluence and collaboration, but the non-familiarity with the platform and the lack of time for an ideal team member make the software another language for the participant to be learned and coped with. Also evident here is a contestation of desires, the desire to “code” and be a Software Developer, and the desire for an *other* who “can show (him) what to do.” SD III is, therefore, limited and pushed by his desires to be a Software Developer and to have a mediating discourse, as he remains alienated in his subjection to Agile. It is this

subjection that inhibits him either by signifying him as an ideal team member or by obliterating the discourse of formal training (in VITA or a project-wide template for writing stories), which denies the symbolic space for unity and leaves the participant isolated from previous intersubjective significations of Agile. This chips at the fantasy of the master signifier, and SD III is caught in the throes of signifying again “*what Agile is supposed to mean*” and what the *business* wants.

8.2.3 Section summary

This section presents three different aspects of how employees are subjected to Agile and the impact it has on their articulation of an *Agilised self*. The section begins with the presentation of the accounts of ITM, PM I, and TL II – all three of these participants were subjected to the fantasy of the master signifier and were oblivious to the void in Agile and hence in their *Agilised self*. In all of these instances, the participants are found to subscribe to or desire an alternate discursive structure that either puts them at the helm or subjects those outside SDC to the master signifier.

BA IV and PO II’s significations of their *Agilised selves* are founded upon the integration of their other symbolic clusters with that of the master signifier. Through this integration of their knowledge arising other symbolic clusters, the participants explore and examine the symbolic space to interpret what Agile is and how it and their *selves* could be signified towards attaining a semblance with their want-to-be *self*. Lastly, in subsection 8.2.2, through an analysis of the account of SD III, the author presents the challenges in the desire for *Agilising*, which manifests as the incongruency between his *non-Agilised* and *Agilised selves*, which is exacerbated by the lack in both Agile and the

Other. Recourse to this incongruency and lack is underpinned in the participant's tacit desire for a mediating other.

8.3 Lack-of-being Agile

The absence of a mediating other, as presented in the previous section, indicates an unarticulated space in the symbolic cluster of Agile. The surfacing of such void weakens the fantasy of the master signifier and its signification of a shared language that can enable collaboration between the different divisions (Vidaillet & Gamot, 2015). This section explores this aspect of being subjected to lack by an examination of the symbolic absence of the participants' signifiers in the oeuvre of Agile's signification (in subsection 8.3.1). These absences are crucial to understanding the participants' dis-identification or limited identification with the master signifier, which informs their *Agilised self*.

Lastly, the author looks at the case of Software Tester II (in subsection 8.3.2), whose subject position is facilitated by the absence of the mediating other, and it is this that substantiates his desire to be. Such substantiation of desire through the lack in Agile not only illustrates the dialectical relationship between the two but also leads to the last and final section of the chapter that looks at the formative aspect of the lack in the master signifier.

8.3.1 The absence of self

SME I was an Underwriter who had joined SDC at its inception but was led to exit after the introduction of Agile. Unlike ITM and PM I, her frustrations with Agile were not as much about the contest for command but about the perceived absence of

relevance for the *business*. From the perspective of an Underwriter-SME, her perception of building Synergy the right way was based upon the notion of *re-creating* the product, such that the superfluous and wasteful parts of it were taken away and only the “*right legacy*” (SME I: 1) was withheld and transferred.

Different from ITM and PM I’s notion of doing things right by doing it the Agile way, for SME I *right* was defined by the re-creation of insurance for a sustainable legacy instead of reducing it to a Minimum Viable Product. In this shift from Synergy to insurance as the object of creation, there was the need to extend Agile beyond software development to the insurance business. The study is, therefore, led to focus on what Agile does not say about insurance and Aegis and how this then shapes the subjectivity of employees caught in this indeterminacy of significations of Agile.

“I have also struggled with pure Agile because it was explained by the consultants from a very green field sight, classic – you want to build a website, and you start with nothing, and you build a little it and then build a little bit. A lot of the key issue with Agile is that it is OK unless you start with a great big complex world in the first place. Because we are not starting with nothing and we have got to fit a whole lot of customers and products with very little disruption on the other end. So, that requires not throwing Agile away, but I think you have got to look at Agile and take different routes to it, which we developed, but it took 18 months to do so. Working with (the previous PO), we had to really work hard at Aegis’s view of prioritisation and backlog management, which is why we have now got some things such as Pre-

Inception...to get a clear view and MVP and that sort of thing. We have had to bend Agile to better fit where we are as an organisation and also the fact that we are not building green field. And initially, that was not acknowledged at all...I still think we suffer a lot of pure Agile.” (SME I: 1)

The two aspects that are of significance in this account of SME I are – the subject’s struggles with the absence of herself in the significations of others (such as that of the IT and Change division) and the master signifier at large and the struggle to signify her desire for the Other through signification of what is right for Aegis.

For the participant, the IT’s signification of “*pure Agile*” was something that was not only unfit for the project but was also something that the *business suffered* from. This and the interpretation of Agile as an approach for building something from the beginning inhibited SME I from seeing how it could accommodate the complexity of building different lines of insurance products on Synergy. It is important to note here that the participant’s inability to understand “*pure Agile*” is not suggestive of cluelessness or the struggles of a novice, as suggested by ITM and PM I in the previous section. Instead, it is a query into the changing nature of a symbolic structure that the participant knows as her own – Aegis and insurance.

Much like ITM and PM I, SME I drew her position in relation to the lack of knowledge in the other – in this case, it was IT’s ignorance of insurance. It was because of this that the participant found it difficult to match the perceived complexity of the project with the claimed simplicity of IT’s signification of Agile, suggested by the principle of building in small pieces. Consequently, the participant’s inability to find

semblance in Agile was supplemented by the *business*' attempt to customise the project to the needs of Aegis and to present a "*different route*" to accommodating "*Aegis's view of prioritisation and backlog management.*" Even though the *business* found a way to customising Agile, the participant does not find a way to integrate her signifiers with that of the master signifier and is ousted from SDC for being "*anti-Agile*" (SME I: 1).

A similar case of struggling to identify with Agile given the absence of the participants' signifiers was seen in the case of BA VI. BA VI had joined Aegis at the onset of the project. Prior to that, he had worked in various multinational companies across different industries. Having joined Aegis in the capacity of a BA, he was involved with the planning aspects of the project. After the transitioning of SDC into Agile from Waterfall, he was put in a position of supporting PO II in the Policy Unit. This entailed looking into the process of building and delivering Synergy, end to end. He was involved in planning for the products in line to be built, enabling the software development process for the teams, releasing built functionalities to the end-users, and facilitating their training in using the software.

The participant's accounts, over the course of the study, are seen to have a few consistent undertones – first, that there is a clear distinction between himself and employees who have worked with Aegis for most of their career. He finds their outlook to be not broadened enough for working on a project of such importance. The second consistent pattern is that of a sense of willed delineation from the IT and Change division of the project, of which he is a part of as a BA. The delineation is founded on the differences in function and language of IT with that of Change Management. These

undertones of delineation and distinction manifest in his critical approach to Agile and how it was signified within SDC, as is seen in the following excerpt.

“IT think quite simply that we can work directly with the business; we do not need you guys. If you are developing an IT solution (and are) responsible for the build of the technical solution, you should not be close to the business requirements, and those should be objective and protected...it is not part of the IT solutions...they do not understand what we are building is immensely complex...the scale of the change that you are trying to push forward has to fit the methodology as well, and it has to be flexible. Quite often, you get that ‘this is not Agile that is not Agile.’ That is very, very frustrating. What does that mean? Agile is a methodology used to build software. How you adapt that methodology depends on what you are trying to do...I think sometimes I feel that the IT guys have been promoting this claim to be the expert, but actually, I do not think they have the fundamental Change Management skills...I find it quite hard to accept the strong views sometimes – you are not doing that, you are not a good displayer of Agile. Agile means different things to different people depending on the problem you are trying to solve.” (BA VI:1)

From the very beginning, the quoted excerpt is strongly indicative of her separation from IT and the struggle to make his position *needed* by intervening between them and the *business*. This desire to be wanted in the project as a liaison between IT and *business* is a result of the commonality of voices enforced by the Agile methodology based on the principles of collaborative working. Agile’s enabling of IT to directly

engage with the *business* encroaches on the participant's agency leading to his struggle for space within the symbolic cluster. Like SME I, such a claim for space has functioned through the intervening signifier of *complexity*. And for BA VI, the privileged understanding of such intricacies of the project is enabled by "*Change Management*" signifiers, which further uphold his sense of self.

BA VI's claims to knowing the complexities of the project better than others are founded on his involvement with various aspects of the project. It is based on this understanding that he insists on centralising his position and not sharing information and expertise with others, such as the IT division or even with the PO (II). Given this, the right methodology for BA VI is the one that is centred on the *complexity* of such extensive change. The participant's threatened sense of self and the absence of his Change Management based signifiers in an *Agilised* symbolic order leads BA VI to fantasise about a methodology that is based on the recognition of his position within the project.

It is fair to say that the participant's sense of self was rooted in what was not, and this pursuit to be identified through the signifier of *Change Management* underlay his struggles with the inevitability of Agile within SDC. This struggle manifests further in the incident of PO II excluding him from a fortnightly project-wide ceremony, called *Sprint Review*, intended at getting a detailed view of the project's status and planning forward.

"PO II has come in, and he wants to do things his way, and he wants to get on top of things, and he has got more confidence, and he is doing things differently.

The (IT and teams) never liked the Deep Dives⁵³; they thought it was un-Agile...the Deep Dives were about kind of are you on track is there any problem...and that would have really helped us stay close to the teams...I suddenly noticed a couple of weeks ago that Sprint Reviews have started to come back, which is effectively the Deep Dives. None of us are in them; none of the Change guys are involved in these Sprint Reviews. So, you have got the Product Owner, with the Project Managers and the teams looking at these, and it is a bad idea. What will happen is he (PO II) will have conversations that he does not really understand at this level, and he will come out and go there is such and such a problem. We have no context because we have not been in the session...why do not you have the right people in them...we are responsible for end-to-end delivery, but we are kept out.”

(BA VI:2)

This excerpt is important for the insight it lends into the symbolic contradiction and struggles of BA VI's being accentuated by the many significations of Agile. To begin with an analysis of this account, it helps to set out with the continued delineation of BA VI from the rest by referring to them as *them and us*. This distinction is to an extent founded on the first reference to PO II, whose enactment of his role has re-defined the BA's agency. The implication here is very much of PO II learning the ropes of his job and seeking to do things his own way, which conflicts with BA VI's

⁵³ Deep Dives were a former version of Sprint Reviews and were cancelled for no clearly specified reason a month into the course of the study. The only difference between the two ceremonies was the inclusion of BA VI and two other planning BAs in the former.

perception and ability to do things right. In this desire-induced identification, BA VI and PO II are conflicted by their association of signifiers with Agile (Bracher, 1993; p. 46).

As for BA VI, the delineation from the IT & Change division and the teams is based on their ability to determine the continuation of practices based on whether or not it is signified as Agile, which further extends into the exclusion of his “*un-Agile*” role. Therefore, the renewal of this ceremony as Sprint Review was intended as the *Agilisation* of the Deep Dives. This was done by firstly, pinning to it the Agile signifier of a ‘Sprint’ and secondly, by excluding the non-Agile roles of BAs. Such alteration in the discursive structure has the effect of shaping conversations within the project, determining access to information, and thereby enforcing control over the participant through exclusion.

Even in this crisis of being, the participant fails to identify with Agile or its clustering signifiers. He still roots his sense of self in “*Change*” roles being the “*right people*” for getting the value from such ceremonies, as it supports and sustains his identification with the knowledge of the project’s “*complexities*” and by laying claim to his involvement in the process from “*end-to-end,*” without, however, recognising the roles of the PO, IT and development teams in it. The struggle to retain his claim to know the *business* is made subservient to Agile, given its ability to speak across the various symbolic clusters of IT & Change and *business*. And the participant is caught in a position of *not being*, given his own insistence on distinction from *business* and IT & Change and the symbolic dearth of signifiers of *Change Management*.

The case of BA III differs from that of SME I and BA VI and is unique for the participant's perception of lack of *self* on account of the inclusion and not an exclusion of *business* in the discourse of the project. BA III had worked in Aegis for nearly three decades, and she had started her career initially as a Software Developer and then transitioned into the role of a BA. Given her technical orientation, she found it difficult to be at the cusp of the convergence of IT and *business*, as was expected by the master signifier, Agile. This resistance was rooted in a strong sense of self that failed to identify with Agile and its inclusion in the *business*. At the level of language, the author finds a definite insistence on segregation in favour of her own position and claim to knowledge and expertise, irrespective of the significations of Agile.

The participant, as a Software Developer, had worked on developing the legacy system, which Synergy was meant to replace. Her position was unique in that she was the only team-based BA who had not transitioned to different teams or projects over the period of time and was also the only BA with a technical background. The latter aspect was seen to have a significant impact on how the participant saw herself as different from the rest and defined her perspective towards what the Synergy system should do.

For the participant, Synergy was not quite the thing for Aegis' strategic future but a mechanism for validating the process of underwriting, much like the legacy system she had previously built. The system, for her, was a way of regulating the actions of an Underwriter, and the role of a BA was to ensure that the *business*' need for development aligned with the system. The following excerpt, where the participant was talking about a recently identified mistake in the product Team II was building, surfaces the

participant's understanding of what Synergy should do for the Underwriters and what his role as a BA was meant to achieve.

“...we don't want a system where the computer says no. But you have also got to stop the inexperienced person from making a keying error or the person hitting the wrong button. It is not that computer says no but the computer saying – you sure you want to do that? And there are times when it will be – no, you cannot do that. They have actually got the system at the moment where it will allow them to have two sets of words, one driven by a cover and one driven by a clause, and there is nothing in the system that says you are supposed to have taken that off...” (BA III:1)

The excerpt has the implication that for BA III, the “system” acts as a conscience, questioning the judgement of the Underwriters and at times stopping them from carrying out an action. While there is a clear rationale behind such an approach to the system that subjects the Underwriter by disallowing flexibility, it is also indicative of wanting to dominate the Underwriters and the SMEs, who are assumed to not understand what Synergy should do and how it should be built. Such domination of the Underwriter is done by way of taking away from them the ability to decide for themselves and choose from the options available on the system, like the ability to choose words based on “cover” or “clause”. The insistence here is on there being a singular way of doing things that the Underwriters must all abide by and which does not account for any differences in requirement based on the cases they are dealing with. This

also leads the participant to assume the position of “*challenging*” the *business* and the SMEs to make them see the “*right*” requirements.

BA III’s identification with the system as a mechanism of control and regulation went beyond the intent of subjecting the *business* to it and reached into the perceived absence of its signification in the way Agile was signified within the project. An instance of this was seen in the occasion of a predicted delay in delivering a product for release given problems with the claim’s functionalities (as was also brought up in the discussion of TL II’s identification with the fantasy of Agile in subsection 8.2.1).

“One of the difficulties with Agile is that Agile as a methodology says you go live in small increments, which is fine if you have got something, and you are changing it in small increments...but if you are putting a house in until the foundations are there...there is no point trying to stick a wall on the top because it is not going to hang together. That just does not make sense...If they have got any sense, they will wait for another month (before it goes live). But we are being pushed to go (live) with an incomplete print solution and potentially no claims...you can do it, but here are the risks, and if it goes wrong, if an Underwriter does that, then you have a breach. If you have a breach, that means that we can get hammered by the regulators...We really do not want to have a breach, especially not when if we had waited for a month, we would not; we could not have that breach. Or we write a programme, which stops them from being able to do what they want to do. But if you write that bit off code to stop them, then you have got to next month to allow them to do it again. So, that is an

awful lot of extra work for a month. Especially when we have got cost challenges...” (BA III: 2)

BA III’s account of the issue begins by targeting the very fundamentals of the suitability of Agile to what she is working on. The Agile principle of building and releasing in small increments is something that the participant fails to identify with. She instead compares it to building a “house” without the “foundation,” given the lack of “sense” in following the significations of Agile that pushes for the product to be released without the claims function.

Such signification of Agile manifests as lacking the signifier of regulations to the participant. It is defined by a lack of appreciation for the risks in compliance in the way Agile is enforced by the Project Managers and the PO (II). In identification with regulations and the likelihood of the Underwriter committing a “breach,” BA II finds a solution in deviating from the master signifier. This implies delivering the complete product and not in parts by delaying the time frame set by Agile. Yet again, the system is seen as an instrument of control, which with an “extra bit off code” could stop the Underwriters from making a mistake. The participant discounts the Underwriters’ ability to understand the risks of a breach or the *business*’ ability to prevent or control the actions of the said users. Beyond such subjection of the Underwriters, BA III’s identification with the IT system as the only way of doing things right for the company disavows the master signifier’s claims to know what the organisational Other wants. And by way of positioning herself as having the sense to see the fallacies in Agile, BA III established herself as the repository of that knowledge. This tendency is interestingly

expressed in the following quote that talks about her job responsibility of eliciting the requirements from the SMEs –

“If you do not ask the right question or you do not ask the question at all, you will not get the right answer. If you phrase a question in a certain way, you will get the answer you are looking for.” (BA III:1)

The participant begins by putting the onus of ensuring the *rightness* on the question and then makes it explicit that the question determines “*the answer.*” In this context, when BA III lays claim to her ability to ask the “*question*” that she supposes to be “*right,*” it paradoxically suggests her looking for an answer from the SMEs that she presupposes to be correct. In this position of claiming knowledge of the “*right*” requirements, the participant relegates the discourse of the *business* as mute recipients. While such relegation pushes BA III farther away from the significations of Agile through collaboration, it also limits the participant’s ability to foster a unifying signifier that traversed the symbolic clusters of IT & Change, *business*, and Agile within SDC. This limitation subtly manifests in the participant’s inability to identify with change. While talking about the company’s recent decision to sell add-on services to its customers along with insurance products, BA III described it in terms of a repetition of the past as opposed to a change from the organisation’s existent state.

“Last week, they (top management executives) were (saying that we are going to sell add-on services and benefits). And I am thinking we were doing this ten years ago...because if you think your core stuff is insurance, it is in the bottom left-hand corner, and you can either sell more insurance, going across the

bottom. Or you can buy add-ons, and we used to actually talk about the upper left bit. Having worked in the company for 27 years, nothing is new; nothing is new. It will come around, and everyone will say – ‘look at this brand-new idea, is this not fantastic?’ No, it is the way we used to work...What goes around comes around. There is nothing new in this world, nothing.”

(BA III: 2)

There is an undertone of nostalgia for the past in this account, which BA III sees as being repeated on this occasion. The perpetual objective of being strategic commercially and advancing technologically to get more business and serve the customers is not novel for the participant, and she finds fulfilment and challenge in translating her technical expertise to practice in these different projects. It is also thereby possible to explain the reason why the novelty of Synergy is lost on her, and it is treated the same as the legacy system – an instrument of regulating action as opposed to enabling it. Underpinned in this dis-identification with Synergy is a nostalgia for the legacy system that she describes as a “*bloody good system*” (BA III:1) and in which she had invested a sense of self. This insistence on *rightness* and regulation is, in a way, also a yearning for her *self* that is being obliterated with the previous system by Synergy (Shortt and Izak, 2020, p. 9).

The narratives of BA III differ from those of all participants, given her dis-identification with Synergy as the strategic future for Aegis. This absence of fantasy around Synergy constrained her from relating to the master signifier that promised access to the knowledge of how Synergy should be built. Instead, the participant found

resonance in the desire for regulations and in creating a system that will monitor and control the actions of the Underwriters. Another instance of such signification of a *right approach* that points at a lack in the master signifier is seen in the case of TL III, who targeted the symbolic absences of Agile by signifying how a team in Aegis should be managed over the prescribed facilitation of an Agile team.

As described in subsection 7.3.1, the Team Lead, despite being called a *Lead*, was supposed to facilitate and not control the team. But this does not result in TL III not seeking that discursive position. For the participant, this seeking of control within a team of *equals* leads to patterns of controlling by way of norming and manipulating the discursive structures within a team.

TL III had recently been made a Team Lead after having worked in Aegis for more than a decade, first as an Underwriter and then as a Software Developer. At the beginning of the research, the participant had mentioned in informal conversations how he was still growing into the role, supported by BA IV. He also confessed that for him, regardless of the methodology, it was about getting the stories across the line and that he saw Agile only as an “*ism*” (TL III: 1). This also manifested in his approach during an incident when a Software Developer (contractor) failed to deliver the assigned number of stories in a Sprint cycle. This was not raised in the Stand Ups, and the concerned Software Developer had only mentioned it in the end minute. This frustrated the participant, who took pride in not having missed a deadline during his employment in the organisation. He alluded such problems to the lack of understanding of “*how they work in (Aegis)*” and drew upon the Aegis’ mantra of *JDI – Just Do It* (TL III: 1). Given

this situation, the participant took recourse to different ways of norming the contractors into the ways of the organisation.

“I am not used to Developers who are not performing (in) the way we in Aegis do, and I have got to quickly change those behaviours...It is part of my role to help them (contractors) to display and carry out the right behaviours, and that is a challenge I like about my role...personnel kind of thing. Developers cost us stories...what will help me feel better is to help them to get it right the next time. There are certain ways of doing things, and it will take you some time to learn, so what you have to do is call out if you are not understanding. If you just want clarity, in fact, do not just want clarity; go and actively seek it. If you are my adviser and you are giving me the technical direction, then go into that discussion with a game plan and do not leave that discussion until you have got your A, B, and Cs in your checklist....”

(TL III: 1)

The participant’s insistence on the contracted Software Developers performing the way they do in Aegis and the description of them in terms of stories is indicative of the intricacies underlying a team that comprises of contractors and Aegis employees. The transactional nature of a client-contractor relationship informs TL III’s assuming a position of control, which is further induced by his primary identification with Aegis over Agile. Also of interest here are the symbolic contradictions inherent in the participant’s perception of his role to “help” the contractors “display the right kind of behaviours” by dictating how the contractors should seek information and interact with

the client organisation. The connotations of power inherent in signifiers of displaying and the appropriation of behaviour are incongruous with the signifier of “*help*” and offer an insight into the contradictions inherent in the symbolic significations of Agile within the complex structure of SDC. In a later instance, this contradiction took the shape of a clear pattern of norming the contractors by creating an alternate, informal discursive team structures.

While talking about the challenges of incessant transitions within the team and the project at large, TL III talked about his approach to dealing with contractors who were due to go or were already working from an offshore location. His approach included assigning the responsibility to enculturate the offshore contractors to a Software Tester with whom he had a good working relationship. TL III talks of making him an extension of the culture he is building in the team.

“I want him to be my little implant. He, because of his nature, is brilliant in his focus on doing it properly, does not do it any other way than it is supposed to be done...(this will) help make sure that we are doing it right offshore.”

(TL III: 1)

Evident here is the manipulation of the Agile principles signifying an egalitarian team by giving more responsibility and control to one member over others. In the process of such enculturation, the participant is also informing his position through this act of delegating responsibility and sanctioning what is “*right*.” This desire to norm the team that delivers successfully also finds a connection with the participant’s need to find a place for his personal signifiers within the symbolic cluster of the team, and this is

exemplified through the repeated reference to what he perceives as right and his history of working in Aegis. Such intersection of personal signifiers drawn from the participant's experience of working in Aegis helps create a subject position that seeks recognition beyond the interpretation of what Agile is.

Unlike TL II's desire to be an *Agilised* Team Lead, TL III was driven by the desire to be an object of desire for Aegis by interpreting and facilitating how the latter functioned and what it wanted. In never having missed a deadline over the years of working in Aegis, TL III knew what *JDI* entailed and integrated it with his signifier of being a TL – one that can *lead* the team into Aegis's symbolic rules and norms. This pattern manifested differently in the case of another team where the absence of a leader was explored by a Software Tester (ST II) to create a sub-group with its own leader and culture within the larger team, as will be discussed next.

8.3.2 Desire for a self within Agile

This aspect of desiring a *self* within Agile is an extension of the desire for an *Agilised self* and is informed by an identification with Agile that sustains their seeking for their want-to-be *self*. This aspect is exemplified by Software Tester (ST) II, a contractor who had previously worked in the retail industry in management-based roles. Software testing for him was a transition towards doing something more challenging and exploring other avenues in the service sector. In conversations with the author, the participant had expressed an inclination to transition into Project Management based roles within SDC. Such identification with the idea of one's *self* as a Project Manager actualised in a very enthusiastic approach to work for ST II. The participant had a

reputation of being amiable, helpful and enterprising, and was often described as the “go-to guy” by his colleagues. His avidness also translated into his perception of Agile as the most “natural” approach to building software in SDC (ST II: 1). Adorning that “natural” approach to Agile, together with his idea of himself as not just a Software Tester, led the participant to assume different informal roles in identification with the signifier of “communication” (ST II: 1).

As has been discussed above, TL II’s passive approach as an Agile facilitator had created opportunities for others in her team to envision a different *self* for themselves. This can be seen in BA III’s perception of herself as the knower of what is right and BA II’s understanding of his role as that of a “leader.” In the case of ST II, this manifests through his signification of *self* as a self-proclaimed “Test Manager” within a team that symbolically had no place for it (ST II: 1).

“We will always have a call before the Stand Up in the morning, like a testing call. We will call in and say how are we, is there anything that is blocking you, are you fine with the work you have got, is there anything I can take over because of the work you have got...even though it is not in the scope of what I am testing, all towards making sure we are building a good quality system...I am more like a full Test Manager, but I take a lot of stuff on and try and help other teams and support other people as much as I can...I try and help everybody. To me, that extra bit of work makes an easier day the next day. That extra bit of communication clarifies things with people; they would know about things before they come. Effectively shows that as a team, we are on the ball, that we know we

are anticipating things. I think it promotes teamwork as well...there is a division between onshore and offshore testing...but now I am constantly on the phone...we have become a stronger team because of that...this adds to quality, we peer review, we work together. That's what it's all about to me and makes the biggest difference.” (ST II: 1)

This excerpt is interesting for its many undertones. The first notable aspect is the STs having their own Stand Up before they join a formal one for the team. This has the effect of creating a communication channel exclusive to the Testers and is, therefore, promptly labelled by the participant as a “*testing call*.” The rest of the excerpt then goes on to unfold the facets of being a self-acclaimed “*Test Manager*” for the participant – an image that he identifies with and one which is not dependent on symbolic articulation by the others. Instead, it is a signifier substantiated by the participant’s finding a resemblance of his imagined *self* projected onto him by the master signifier.

In this imaginary role as a “*Test Manager*,” the participant sets an objective to achieve a “*good quality system*.” He facilitates this end by ensuring that his colleagues are comfortable with the work that they have taken on and that everybody has the requisite knowledge of what the other is doing. Thereby extending the limits of what he needs to know and do as a Software Tester. This approach to staying well informed extends beyond his own sub-team of Software Testers to the whole project and is driven by the intent of making communication more effective so that contingent issues arising from it are contained. Furthermore, he implies having the vision for “*anticipating things*” such that his sub-team can always be prepared for contingencies. With these

implied qualities of initiating facilitation, enhancing collaboration, problem-solving, and having a vision of building a sound futuristic Synergy, the participant justifies his positioning of *self* in the place of a manager – an entity that remains unrecognised by the symbolic cluster of the team and SDC at large.

In the later stages of the research, the participant was seen as building on this notion of *self* by adorning other signifiers. Along with BA V and a Software Developer, ST II had volunteered to help the Underwriters acclimatise to the Synergy system alongside the formal training made available to the latter. They had established direct contact with the Underwriters and had conversations based on familiarising them with Synergy and learning of the problems they encountered while using the platform. The knowledge from this interaction was then intended to be fed back into the SDC and mobilised towards building the afore mentioned “*good quality system.*” Firstly, this had the implication of ST II’s transcending the symbolic cluster of Team II to that of SDC at large in manoeuvring a place for himself. Secondly, this formed a new discursive relationship with the end-users in *business* and created new significations for what constitutes a *defect* in the Synergy platform being built.

“(Underwriters) are having little niggles in terms of things not working the way they would want it to work. We would go in as in a Three Amigos, which we have in teams, and previously we have never had that, so (we had) not had any one-to-one communication...One of the biggest one we found, we have a functionality...and they loved it, but there are niggles that they are not happy with. But when I went up, I identified straight away what they were doing

wrong...by us just having a conversation with them means that we can help them in looking things and saying look that is not actually a defect...They see who is working in there (SDC) and makes it easy for them to communicate...The process that is in place currently is that they will raise a defect, and that will go through the business to be prioritised. So, it takes weeks before it gets to me for its turnaround. Whereas my suggestion was there is a forum where people post all the defects. If I had access to that, I could look through and say that is not actually a defect. So, rather than waiting three weeks on that and the policies held up, I can say that is not a defect, you're doing that wrong, and then they could address straight away..."

(ST II: 3)

In this excerpt, the participant is seen to re-emphasise the importance of what the Underwriters expect from the Synergy system. It is with reference to this significant aspect that he seeks to build a relationship of “*one-to-one communication*” that bypasses not only the discursive frameworks of deployment and training but also that of the *business*, which reviews, prioritises, and then allocates the defects raised by the Underwriters. While there is no direct reference to Agile, there is mention of its symbolic manifestation as a Three Amigos ceremony. Such a meeting is constituted to the end of forming parallel and malleable teams that re-instate his position of control, thereby enabling him to create alternative approaches to signification. This relationship differs from the existing structure of SDC because of being centred on knowledge and its exchange with the end-users and seeks to redefine temporality by proposing to

minimise the delays in resolving issues. The effect of such discursive re-formulation is the signification of “*defects*” by way of differentiating those from “*niggles*”. This direct relationship offers the participant the scope to signify his knowledge in the forum and potentially re-shape what is understood as defects by the Underwriters and within SDC as a whole.

ST II’s shaping the discursive boundaries within his team and in Aegis at large is derived from his knowledge, his recognition of the *business*’s desire, and its alignment with the pursuit of his want-to-be *self*. The next section provides a closer look at the nuances of this recognition of other’s desires and its alignment with the desire for *self*.

8.3.3 Section summary

In this elaborate section, the author intended to examine the multifaceted and complex impact of lack which leads the participants to strive for their significations of *self* in relation to Agile. The section began with examining SME I and BA VI’s dis-identification with the master signifier on account of the absence of the signifiers that represent their want-to-be *self*. Faced with this void, both SME I and BA VI are found to struggle with “making themselves recognised” as different from Agile (Lacan, 1968, p.114). For BA III and TL III, the absence of their signifiers intended at building Synergy by subjecting the *business* or managing a team, respectively, manifests in their striving for a signification of their *selves* in lieu of the lack in the master signifier.

Lastly, in subsection 8.3.3, such centralisation of one’s *self* is seen to emerge through ST II’s creating and participating in parallel discursive structures that align his knowledge and want-to-be *self* with the desires of others, such as his colleagues and

Underwriters. The participant's ability to create a symbolic space for his desire is enabled by signifying Agile-related signifiers in a way to compensate for what the master signifier and its symbolic cluster do not address while bolstering its power.

8.4 The self in Agile

The previous section was pivotal in establishing the resurgences of lack within Agile and the ways in which it impelled the participants to positions of finding or creating a sense of self in relation to the master signifier. With the undertone of the lack in Agile and the desire for a *self*, this section brings to the surface another key facet, which is the need to make sense to others and mobilise them towards a common goal. In other words, it manifests the fantasised function of the master signifier through an alignment of desires of the self and others. This section extends this configuration of the subject and the lack-induced fantasy of the master signifier in some detail by looking at two participants, BDC and BA V.

BDC was an early career professional who had joined Aegis as an Underwriter five years ago and had come into SDC during its early days. While working as an Underwriter, she was appointed to work on a Systems Thinking intervention that aimed at minimising wastage in the Underwriting processes for a product, such that the re-designed process could then be transferred on to the Synergy system. Post which, she had joined SDC as a liaison between the Policy and the Claims Unit. However, this role of mediation was eclipsed by the transition from Waterfall to Agile. The participant had then essayed through the roles of an SME and a Defects Analyst before settling into the self-created role of a Business Design Consultant. The participant confessed that the

movement between different roles was about finding the right place for herself within the project and figuring out how she could make an “*impact*” by applying her skills.

“I did not really have a subject matter that I was an expert in at the start. I was an expert in Systems Thinking, having done that for a couple of years, but there was not a lot of Systems Thinking stuff to be done on the system now. It is strange because Synergy, I suppose, is the final step in the transformation...we had to do Systems Thinking first before we bought Synergy. Otherwise, we would have ended up building a wrong IT system because the IT system would not be based on clean processes; it would be based on all the rubbish we used to do. So, there was some Systems Thinking stuff I could get involved in, in Synergy, about how to build it right based on the new processes and why we have done this in the process, and we have to build it now. But I didn’t really make any impact on the project for a while....”

(BDC: 1)

Evident in this quote is BDC’s perspective being defined by Systems Thinking – a signifier that identified with an idea of herself as an “*expert*” given the success of the project that she had worked on. This perceived need to be an “*expert*” and make an “*impact*” indicates the roots of her identification as well as her desired *self*. The “*right*” Synergy system, for the participant, is the one that is founded on the results of a Systems Thinking intervention. Even though she was given certain Systems Thinking based tasks, it was not enough to create the perception of significant “*impact*” in the project and, therefore, had led her to seek a sense of self elsewhere within the project. BDC’s

perceived need to make a valuable contribution within SDC made it necessary for her to engage more closely with the master signifier and make sense of it beyond her attachment to Systems Thinking.

Interestingly, such *Agilisation* of self is enabled by her aptitude in Math, which qualified her to be a Pricing SME. The coming together of an Agile role and “*numbers*” – something the participant was good at – shaped an *Agilised* sense of self, and she is sustained by the feeling of finding a place in the project and making “*some headway.*” Moving on from this position, BDC took up a more “*overarching role,*” whereby she advised SMEs across the project on what they were building and on the defects they encountered. This new responsibility created discursive channels for the participant to engage more closely with Agile by looking at what it does not do through an examination of its defects. It also drives her to build on a new area of expertise.

“...I think I am one of the few SMEs that has got a technical, almost Developer kind of knowledge of how the system works...I can understand the logic of code because it is no different from the logic of Math...So just picking it up through working with Developers and actually working Agile is going to help do that for anyone, I think. You pick up so much that you do not even notice just because you work with them so much. So, picking up those added extras of Synergy coding on top of the logic of Math helped me...There are not enough people who really like solving problems...so through all these defects and just through learning how the system works I have sort of become an expert of how the whole system works and not just Pricing...” (BDC:1)

This excerpt is remarkable for its insight into the mechanism of *Agilising* the participant. There are two aspects to this mechanism – the identifications of the participant with the needs of the project and the subjection to Agile. Unable to find a significant enough place for the Systems Thinking signifier, BDC had filled the need within SDC with her aptitude for numbers as a “*Pricing SME.*” It had helped her find a place for herself within the project by way of becoming the object of desire for the project, who has something to offer. This fed into her sense of self by offering the gratification of “*recognition*” and “*stature.*” Such induction into the Agile team through identification with her skill and the need to be an expert aids the subtleties of subjection to Agile both as a methodology and as a master signifier.

The subtlety of such subject formation is beautifully expressed in the above excerpt. The participant initially accounts for it in terms of what she already knows – her aptitude – and the taken-for-granted assumption of “*it’s just something that I can do.*” However, crucially she almost instantaneously surfaces the ability to reflect and recognise the role of Agile and in her subjection to it by not knowing exactly how it works. This renewed sense of self as a unique SME within Agile, who is reflective and an expert on how the “*whole system works,*” opens the avenue for BDC to navigate and explore the symbolic domains of the Synergy, Agile, and the *business* that she represents, thereby enabling her to examine the absences in those from an analyst like position.

“Each SME only cares about himself...and (his) own business line. They do not care about everybody else in the system. Naturally, you are going to get every

part of the system looking completely different...they do not care about consistency...one overarching sort of design through the system...they (Underwriters) are used to how they work today, and they are used to what they have already got and eventually you would just replicate the (old system) on the new system...and not thinking about designing...about a strategic future. So, I identified that this was happening or about to happen...and the previous PO... said – yeah, I agree, so we need a Business Design Consultant to (be) sort of attached to (the technical design) team in a way. To make sure that the technical solutions are being implemented in that system have got business input from a sort of strategic point of view.”

(BDC: 1)

This excerpt surfaces BDC’s ability to traverse across varied symbolic clusters – ‘*underwriting*,’ ‘*Systems Thinking*,’ and ‘*Pricing*’ function – to understand the “*whole system*.” She finds in others the absence of the same holistic view given the absence of signifiers of “*consistency*” and an “*overarching*” continuity in the many significations of Agile, which limits SDC’s ability to achieve the “*transformation*” that participant believes it needs.

BDC begins by picking apart the limits of language imposed by the SMEs’ familiarity with the existent nature of things and their inability to transition into other symbolic domains by transcending those boundaries. Such absence of far-reaching transition is set against the signifiers of the “*new system*” that corresponds to a “*strategic future*” for the organisation. Therefore, the participant seeks to fill in such

absences in the symbolic clusters of Agile and the *business* with the mediating signifier of “*consistency*” in the technical design of the Synergy system. This has a significant impact of impelling the Synergy signifier to the effect of signifying it as a “strategic” and “futuristic” manoeuvre by Aegis.

The participant, through the suggested creation of herself as a BDC, seeks to position Synergy as the object of desire as opposed to the desire to be *Agile* and beyond her subjection to it. The signifier of BDC, at one level, converges the participant’s signifiers of insurance, Math, technical design, Agile and Systems Thinking. On another level, it extends to the project-wide discourse and draws together the different symbolic clusters of Agile, Synergy and Aegis through the mediating signifiers of “*consistency*” and “*strategic future*.” This sustains the fantasy of Agile as a unifying discourse that can lead to the Other by mobilising her personal signifiers in place of what Agile fails to say and thereby fostering the same fantasy of unity and coherence for others.

Much like BDC, BA V, too, has transitioned through many roles within the project in pursuit of a place for herself. However, unlike the former participant, BA V’s essay was marked by knowing how her skills could be applied in the project, regardless of what role she was in. BA V had worked in Aegis for many years as an Underwriter. She had joined SDC a year ago as an SME but was appointed as a BA soon after.

During her time in SDC, she had worked on various parts of the process, starting from planning for all the teams in PU, developing training content for the Underwriters using the newly released functionalities of the Synergy system, and then she had also served as a team-based BA. Even while working as a team-based BA, the participant

went beyond the periphery of the team and talked about what was right for the organisation at large, what would be a good way to build Synergy, and the importance of learning from mistakes at the level of the project. This enthusiasm was paralleled with a keen interest in personal development by way of doing new things. Her accounts of what she has done were always intertwined with references to things that she had learned or would like to learn, and it was this that defined her association with Agile – it offered her a new symbolic cluster to identify and interpret through learning.

“Traditional BA role would not have been for me but Agile...is much more natural...practical, you think end to end, you think about the functionality and impact...it allows you to use your skills...” (BA V:1)

In this first conversation about her job profile and role within the project, BA V identifies with the signification of the master signifier as *“practical”* and the flexibility that it allows her to employ and nurture her skills. Therefore, Agile is perceived as an enabler of agency for those subjected to it. It is this sense of agency that enables the participant to work in all parts of the process of building and delivering Synergy. Furthermore, such a sense of agency, together with her sense of self rooted in her skills and the desire to develop those, leads to a differentiated and innovative approach to working. An instance of this is seen in BA V’s development of audio-visual guides for the Underwriters learning to use the new Synergy system. This varied from the traditional approach of developing manuals and was rooted in need to make the training process more user-friendly for the Underwriters. The participant went beyond the standardised perceptions of the end users’ needs and examined the process of learning

for them, leading to the previously unrecognised aspects of training needs. Impelling these new signifiers to the symbolic cluster of SDC results in her developing a signifying chain through the training modules. The participant accounts for this in the following manner -

“It might not be the way Aegis wanted to go forward. It was a bit radical because we do not have an area within Aegis that says this is how we should do it...it just got to a point where there was nobody, so we had to do it ourselves.”

(BA V:1)

The implication here is that this “*radical*” new approach fills in the void within SDC and Aegis at large by locating her own being as a locus for signification. Also evident here is the movement away from what Agile says to chart new territories on her own. This further resulted in the participant shifting from one project to another and working on different things in identification with her perceived ability to work on different things and be in charge of her own development. Similar to PO II, BA V ventures into signifying a right approach. However, unlike PO II, BA V is aware of the significations of Agile and is conscious of not targeting the malleability of the signifier. She is cognisant of what is or is not Agile.

“...we are going into Inception with a prototype...and the SMEs (could) physically see what they wanted. It is easier for us to then go into build. Again, it is not very Agile, but for us, it works. It makes us more efficient definitely.”

(BA V:2)

While this tendency to define the right approach to doing things regardless of the master signifier is common to many participants (BA III, VI and TL III), there is a subtle difference in this case of BA V. The compass for what is right for BA V is set by what works for others and makes it easier for them to have a common understanding. In the above excerpt, the participant is talking about making the Inception ceremony more effective in terms of creating a clear and common understanding between the *business* and SDC through the use of a prototype – a visual aid offering a common language for all parties. This, according to the participant, is helpful to the process of building Synergy “*easier,*” “*quicker,*” and “*efficient*” and pushes forth the signification of the *right* methodology over its signification of Agile. Therefore, in a way, the intention behind using prototypes is to make the Agile ceremony of Inceptions more effective.

The participant’s identification with being an *Agile BA* and her focus on making the master signifier more efficient by drawing on other “*not very Agile*” signifiers such as that of “*prototypes*” surface the underlying symbolic contradictions in BA VI’s narrative. As the author followed her through the course of the study, she found that these contradictions and the transitions in roles that the participant had had within a relatively short term in the SDC had left her without any attachment to a singular role or discourse. This surfaces as more pronounced in her description of the interrelationship between the different divisions and of finding a place for her dynamic role. Different from her first account of herself as an “*Agile BA,*” this excerpt looks into the intricacies of her pursuit for likeness under the label of “*IT & Change.*” This pursuit is

characterised by contradictions and sifting through signifiers to find a fit for her job title and the range of things she does within the project.

“IT & Change are now under one head, we are one function now, and I very much feel like I am part of one team...So I feel like I am IT & Change working together...although we are Change BAs, I do not feel like I belong to Change alone; that’s what I told my manager the other day. That is not what I do, and this is going to be my role going forward...I think it is more of a constant evolving and improving of the business processes and capability...There has to be an outcome for me; something has to change or become better...it is a bit of transformation... Like, I work in Change and in IT. No, we work together, collaborate together to get the right outcome for the business, because without an Underwriter or without someone in the frontline speaking to our customers, there is no role for us...I do not just belong to Change. I belong to an environment that supports business. So, that is System Thinking; you are a support system to that front line core role...When I wanted to do this thing (creating a communication channel with ST II and Underwriters about issues with the newly built system) with the business, the IT head said it is a great idea...for me if I go upstairs and I can help them with some of the ways to use the system from a Developer point-of-view and a Tester pointer-of-view, these are the guys that are doing the work. Not me; I am a facilitator...I actually do not do anything...I just facilitate...I can step away from the whole business thing, and it

will still continue, and they will still get value out of it...I enjoy it, and when I enjoy it, I will do it 10 hours a day.” (BA V:2)

Being a “*Change BA*” within the division of IT & Change faced the participant with the absence in signification of the togetherness in the symbolic associations. This absence soon manifested in the contradiction in feeling affiliated to the signifiers of the division, which only served the purpose of defining what she was not. BA V’s desired discourse was one that contained all the different aspects, largely the IT and the *business*. The Underwriter as the end-user was as much a part of her being as the IT division was. This is also evident in her “*radical*” approach to teaching the Underwriters how to use the IT system and also in her seeking to help them understand it better by initiating a direct contact between them and the Software Developers and Testers by bypassing the official forum (as explained in the case of ST II). Since the change label failed to encompass these aspects, the participant contemplated on more holistic signifiers of “*transformation*” and “*Systems Thinking*” – both sourced in from divisions external to SDC, thereby indicating the failure of the master signifier in bringing all the discourses together in Aegis and SDC, for the participant.

From this point on, the participant goes on to describe the absence of signification in terms of how she perceives her role as a “*facilitator*” between the IT and *business* and as an enabler of “*collaboration*”. These attempts to find a signifier that captures all these facets of her work and initiate a common language (like the prototype in Inception) interestingly leads to the eclipsing of her being. For the participant, her role exists as long as the IT and *business* are different. Such difference was fueled by the

perceived incongruities between the divisions of IT & Change, Change within IT and Change and *business*. The unison of these different elements was a fantasised pursuit that the master signifier promised and mediated to an extent by letting her use her “*skills*” but failed to fulfil for BA V. This had two implications for the participant – firstly, her role was better understood in terms of finding what Agile did not say – including what her job title was and where she belonged – by way of interpolating signifiers into the symbolic order. Secondly, it led the participant to signify herself as the function that, once fulfilled, would eclipse her being. Her identification with “*skills*” beyond a specific job role enabled her ability to explore her capabilities within SDC. It created the fantasy of success based on the perfection of the master signifier Agile, such that it would make her role obsolete and lead her to create another transient *self* through the signification of another task.

8.4.1 Section summary

This section looks into BDC and BA V’s identifications with the absences in the master signifier and significations of themselves as what Agile is not. The desire underlying these patterns is to do the right thing for SDC and for Aegis at large by addressing the absences in the significations of the master signifier and in the discourse of the project. These symbolic movements towards minimising the difference between the *self* and the master signifier are sustained by the fantasy of perfection that encompasses all. And the ability to pursue this fantasy is based on the extent of its legitimisation by the various discourses within SDC through an alignment of the desires of the self and of the O/others along with the lack in the master signifier.

8.5 Chapter summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the empirical insights gathered from the ethnographic study of the Synergy Development Centre in Aegis. With Agile having emerged as a master signifier in the context of this study, the findings unpack the varied ways in which the interrelationship between the master signifier and the participants as its subject manifest. The intent behind focusing on this interrelationship was to examine how the participants' pursuit of *self* was shaped by the master signifier.

The findings begin by looking at how some participants were impelled by the fantasy of the *self* mirrored to them by the master signifier and the varied ways in which they signified an *Agilised self* based upon their perception of the difference between their *Agilised* and *non-Agilised self* (in section 8.2). This section also captures the struggles inherent in the process of traversing the difference between the two selves. The next section (8.3) built upon this aspect of lack through the absences that were symptomatic of this unnameable void. The participants in these instances struggle to signify a *self* through dis-identification or partial identification with the master signifier.

In the final section (8.4), the chapter presents the ability of two participants to look beyond the absence of their *selves* in the oeuvre of the master signifier and address the larger symbolic void that afflicts the master signifier and the O/others. It is in their signifiatory efforts of compensating for this lack by supplementing the master signifier that evidence of the knowledge of *otherness* is found in the participants' articulation of their *want-to-be self*. The desire to build on the fantasy of the master signifier by seeking to eliminate the lack has two significant implications – firstly, it accepts the role of Agile

as the master signifier that knows the way to a strategic future for Aegis. Secondly, by seeking to fulfil the lack in Agile, the subjects submit their desires for the *self* in favour of sustaining the fantasy of completion and wholeness for the project. And in doing so, the participants transcend from being subjected to the master signifier to co-creating it. The next chapter mobilises the complexities of the participants' relationship with Agile as a master signifier towards examining the research issues by drawing back upon the conceptual resources outlined in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 9 | DISCUSSIONS: AN EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH ISSUES

9.1 Chapter introduction

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it mobilises the insights gained from the findings towards examining the three research issues outlined in the introductory chapter of this thesis. Second, it builds on the understanding gained from this examination of research issues towards a re-theorisation of emotional autonomy in the next chapter.

The first section (9.2) delves into the aspect of the participants' orientation to the prevailing socio-symbolic context in SDC by focusing on their relationship with the organisational Other from the perspective of their primal alienation in the discourse of the university. The discourse of the university is found to shape the participants' fantasy induced identification with the master signifier and the *self* it mirrors to them. The second section (9.3) examines how participants cope with the unfolding context by analysing the nature and mechanisms of their desire for the Other. The author draws upon Bracher's (1993) classification of desire to *be* or *have* the Other and examines how this impacts the participants' ability to cope with the master signifier through their significations.

The third section (9.4) deals with the final and crucial issue of how the participants gained legitimacy for their articulations. The author posits that such legitimisation is contingent upon the response of others as the recipient of these

articulations. Therefore, in this section, the significations of the participants are examined from the perspective of how those position the relational others. This aspect is underpinned by a complex configuration of the participants' knowledge, the master signifier and desire for the Other, which is analysed from the theoretical perspective of alienation and separation. In this section, the pursuit of the desire for emotional autonomy is aligned with separation and the desire to *think*, thus setting the foundation for its re-theorisation in chapter 10.

9.2 Research Issue I: How did the participants orientate themselves relative to the prevailing socio-symbolic context?

An investigation of this research issue delves into how the participants orientated themselves to their context of working in SDC for building Synergy by following the dictates of Agile as a master signifier. The study finds that the participants' orientation centres upon how they define their want-to-be *self* through the master signifier and the various discursive influences. There are three facets to examining this research issue -

- ~ locating the participants in the discourse of the university, which will enable the examination of how the participants' desire the Other in this discourse through processes of primal alienation or alienation,
- ~ establishing the patterns of participants' varied relationship with the master signifier, and ⁵⁴
- ~ examining the way this relationship shapes what the subject can and cannot do.

⁵⁴ This paves the way to examining the relationship between the participants' desires and their identificatory patterns and how that is mediated by the master signifier. This aspect will be further expounded upon in the discussion of the second research issue in section 9.3.

To address the first facet mentioned above, the author begins by commenting on the relationship between the organisational Other and the discourse of the university. Due to Lacan's contradictory and evolving concepts, it has been challenging to find references to the relationship between the university discourse and the Other. Yet, it is not hard to find parallels between the two concepts. With respect to the subject's relationship with the Other, Lacan had stated that "...the subject first appears in the Other, in so far as the first signifier, the unary signifier, emerges in the field of the Other and represents the subject for another signifier..." (Lacan, 1998e, p. 218). In the discursive context of an organisation, this has the effect of the subject first emerging in the domain of the Other and being subsequently instated in its network of relationships, knowledge and culture. Such emergence and positioning of the employee in the realm of the other comes at the cost of her alienation to the organisational Other. Bracher (1993) interprets the university discourse in a similar strain of subjecting the subject to its demands. He presents such subjection as the first step towards the alienation of the subject to the university – a totality of the unstructured body of knowledge – which forces upon her the responsibility to interpret, represent and reproduce its knowledge (pp. 55 - 57).

The orchestration of the Other by the university discourse has the effect of giving the subject the symbolic resources to represent herself to others and, eventually, to engage with the tormenting powers of the master signifier (Bracher, 1993, pp. 58 - 59). Such an interpretation of the university discourse is not meant to disagree with its function of supporting the possibility and rise of master signifiers. Instead, it is intended

to extend the appreciation of the university discourse for enabling some access to the excess of a subject (*a*) under the purview of the university despite its suppression in the master's discourse. Thus, enabling the recognition of the participants' fragmented subject positions in discourse. Furthermore, this thesis has found that these different fragments of the participants' *selves* are pivotal to how the participants orientate in the socio-symbolic cluster of SDC (Harding, 2007), as is discussed below.

In this thesis, several instances have emerged where the participants are spread across discourses that are not confined to their being subjected to the master's discourse in SDC. Though these discursive roots lie outside the realm of SDC and Agile, they remain firmly within the oeuvre of the organisational Other, and hence of the university discourse. The impact these discursive influences have on the participants' *Agilisation* makes it important to consider such fragmentation of the participants at the dint of the university discourse by looking at their primal alienation to Aegis. This aspect is exemplified firstly by participants who were previously employed in positions that were not subjected to Agile and had brought with them the knowledge and experience gained from the symbolic clusters of those previous job roles and relationships (ref. first segment of Table 6 below). Secondly, despite the restructuring of the framework of relationships in SDC at the dint of Agile as a master signifier, the participants individually and teams at large were both indispensably entwined with relationships that existed beyond the social structure of the master signifier (such as for deployment and knowledge of underwriting and insurance). Thirdly, several participants (such as the BA's, SMEs and Contractors) were not exclusively subjected to the symbolic structure

of SDC and the master signifier and were also shaped, enabled and managed by other symbolic structures outside the purview of Agile.

Integration of the fragmented selves		
Participant	Description (Approach defined by...)	Reference
TL III	Signification of how work is done in Aegis by following the mantra of “JDI - Just Do It”.	Sub-section 8.3.1
PO II	Signification of Agile in terms of signifiers of “risk and governance” and “rigour”.	Sub-section 8.2.1
Disjoining of fragmented selves		
BA VI	Conflict between her <i>self</i> working in a Waterfall methodology and her <i>self</i> enforced by the master signifier.	Sub-section 8.3.1

Table 6. *The fragmented selves in the discourses of the university and the master.*

While the fragmentation of *self* is capable of causing tensions, as is found in the case of BA VI (ref. second segment of Table 6), it also informs the participants’ approach to signification of the master signifier (as seen with TL III and PO II). Therefore, the recognition of the university discourse that settles and upholds these different networks of relationships and aggregates the symbolic resources offered by them leads this study to the participants’ primal alienation to the organisational Other and the struggles inherent in it (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 372). The study, therefore, proposes that the university discourse not only legitimises the master’s discourse but also enables the possibility for the barred subjects to access their self beyond the master signifier. On account of these reasons, uncovered in this thesis, the author ranks the need to recognise the subject in the discourse of the university before locating her in the master’s discourse.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ This, however, is at variance with Lacan’s (2007a, pp. 11 – 12) position that the discourse typology begins with the discourse of the master that structures the discourse of university around its demand for knowledge and situates the subject in relation to it.

With such illustration of the mechanisms of the participants' primal alienation to the Other in the university discourse, it is important to expound on the relationship between primal alienation and desire. The relationship between processes of alienation and desire is inextricable, as Fink (1995) succinctly describes it, as the "warp and woof of the same fabric" (p. 50). The primal alienation of the participants in the discourse of the university introduced the participants to the overwhelming and elusive totality of the organisational Other (Verhaeghe, 2019, pp. 371 - 372) and further orientated the participants' desire to do the right thing for the organisation and cater to its need for change (Stavrakakis, 2008, Essers, Böhm and Contu, 2009, Fotaki, 2009). However, it was only when the participants were brought face to face with the surreptitious and often tormenting powers of the master signifier that the complexities of discourse began to emerge, and the study was led into territories that chart through and beyond the influences of educating, commanding, desiring and transforming (Bracher, 1993, p. 53, Fink, 1995, p. 145).

The master signifier emerged in this situation, characteristically, as a way for the employees to do what is good for the organisational Other – build Synergy by following the Agile methodology (Bracher, 1993, p. 24). This charting of the uncertain path by the master signifier had a twofold impact on the participants. One, by raising to the participants an idealised mirror image of themselves, it impelled in them a search for semblance – something that ITM, PM I, and TL II found, and SME I and BA VI struggled to (ref. Table 7). Two, it impelled the participants to translate their desire in relation to the master signifier. This involved for some a translation of their desire

according to Agile, and for some to mediate their desire via Agile, as will be discussed in section 9.3. But for the purposes of discussing how the participants orientate themselves, this had the implication of the participant finding a place for herself in relation to the master signifier, from where she could speak.

Search for semblance – in identification with the master signifier		
Participant	Description (Identification with self as...)	Reference
ITM	the knower of what “Agile stands for...”.	Sub-section 8.2.1
PM I	an “expert” who knows how to work in an “Agile way”	
TL II	A conformist “to the concept of a proper Agile team”.	
Search for semblance – in dis-identification with master signifier		
SME I	A sufferer of “pure Agile”.	Sub-section 8.3.1
BA VI	Not a “good displayer of Agile”.	

Table 7. Search for semblance with the master signifier

The delicate configuration of desire for the Other and the master signifier shaped the participants’ ability to signify and situated them in the discursive framework of relationships. So, in essence, the examination of the orientation of the participants is dependent upon finding that want-to-be *self* either through identification or disidentification with the master signifier. There are, however, nuances to this delicate configuration, and it is determined largely by how the master signifier related to the participants’ perception of themselves as Agile. Equally, there is a problem with situating the participants in relation to the master signifier in such varied ways in pursuit of the self and the Other. The problem is on account of the limitations of Lacan’s discourse typology in positioning the subject in relation to the master signifier to certain specified relations. The author reiterates the importance of discovering the unsymbolised

crevices of the discourse framework to this research, which enable the analysis of the nuances of the participants’ varied identifications with the master signifier, as is outlined below in Table 8.

Signification of self through fantasy induced identification		
Participant	Description (Identification through...)	Reference
BA IV	Integration of a “layered approach” to “planning in an Agile way”.	Sub-section 8.2.1
ST II	Signification of self as a “Test Manager” in the crevices of the master signifier.	Sub-section 8.3.2
BA V	Signification of self as a non “traditional BA” by identifying with the master signifier as “practical and natural”.	Sub-section 8.4
Unquestioned subjection through fantasy induced identification		
ITM, PM I and TL II	Identification with the master signifier by adopting a prescriptive approach to the master signifier as its experts or advocates.	Sub-sections 8.2.1
Subjection to the lacking – fantasy induced identification		
SD III	The fantasy of the master signifier and SD III’s need for a “template” that signifies it.	Sub-section 8.2.2

Table 8. Types of identification with the master signifier

The fantasy of the master signifier shaped for the participants what they knew, needed to know and desire (Bracher, 1993, pp. 46 - 47). In some participants, this had onset a process of identification with the idealised mirror image, and they engaged in varied signification practices towards actualising that fantasised self through the master signifier (ref. first segment of Table 8). This aspect of signifying the master signifier through identification will be further expounded upon in sections 9.3 and 9.4.

For some participants, however, the fantasy of the master signifier was complete, and there was little or no scope for it to fail the Other (ref. second segment of Table 8). This surfaces the tyrannical functioning of the master signifier that impelled the subject through identification in search of a sense of self but then also decentred her from her place of enunciation. This study finds the participants thus affected, treated the master

signifier as an end in itself (Bracher, 1993, p. 61) despite being afflicted by its lack. The perpetuity of lack surfaced in their interactions with others and failed to confirm this view of the master signifier as flawless and final. This forced the participants to repeatedly signify themselves through the master signifier as its knowers and advocates (Parker, 2014a, p. 41). Such mirroring of themselves in the master signifier was an effect of the participants' fantasy of the originary totality that directed their desire.

Contrary to the above-mentioned instance of fantasy-induced identification with the master signifier, this study also found instances where the fantasy was tainted by an unnamed lack of the Other (Bracher, 1993, pp. 45 - 46). The participant (SD III, ref. the third segment of Table 8) subjected to the fantasy of the master signifier was led to identify with the *self* Agile projected onto her. However, the identification was impeded on account of their being overwhelmed by the enormity of the master signifier. Such overwhelming fantasy of the master signifier prevented them from identifying the lack and the meaningless in it. But they were nonetheless afflicted by the fantasy that prevented them from identifying with the master signifier in any meaningful way and led them to cast the void on others, thus subjecting them to their identity as a subject of the master signifier and constraining them to *being* (Moati, 2014, pp. 158 - 159).

9.2.1 Section summary

The orientation of the participants in their socio-symbolic context is thus, characterised by the setting of the participants symbolically in pursuit of their desired *selves* in relation to the Other and the master signifier. It alienates the subjects first, in the symbolic order of the organisational Other and then in the cluster of the master

signifier, whereby the participant is faced with the challenge to interpret her desire for the Other in terms of the master signifier. Thus, shifting in the position held by the subject in the discourse framework and shaping relationships accordingly. Of significance here is the need to recognise the participant's desire for the organisational Other that both harbours and sustains the notion of the subject's alienated and desired *self*.

9.3 Research Issue II – How do participants cope with the continual unfolding of their changeable social context?

In extension of the previous section, this thesis posits that the participants cope with the unfolding signification practices surrounding the master signifier through the compass of their desires for the Other. An examination of the kinds and mechanisms of desire, therefore, is conducive to identifying the impelling forces of the master signifier and the ways in which it impacts the participants' alienation. In other words, it is to desire that the master signifier speaks (Bracher, 1993, pp. 23, 72, 91).

It is understood by this point that the fantasy-induced image of a new *self* mirrored by the master signifier stimulates in the participants the desire to orientate themselves towards or against it, as illustrated in the previous section (Bracher, 1993, p. 19). But like most things in psychoanalysis, this identification with an illusionary and projected image of the master signified *self* is not simple. The transformation of the participants as subjects of the master signifier takes many forms, which befit the emptiness of the symbolic mandate and leads to its reproduction through identification and varied significations (Bracher, 1993, pp. 25 - 28). But more significantly for the

participants, this implies a passage into a more complete alienation into the symbolic realm of the Other based on the interplay of their struggles to signify their knowledge and the demands of the master signifier (Bracher, 1993, Fink, 1995, Verhaeghe, 2019) Therefore, there are two aspects that emerge in importance here – one, the relationship between the subject, desire, the master signifier and the role of knowledge as a function of desire (Bracher, 1993, pp. 19 - 22) and second, the intricate dynamics of the desire to *be* or *have* the Other as have emerged in this study and have been discussed in subsection 3.2.1 (Bracher, 1993, pp. 23 - 31). In the following subsections, these two aspects are integrated towards an in-depth analysis of the participants’ desires.

9.3.1 *The desire to be*

The desire to *be* for some participants was shaped by the desire to serve the Other through the master signifier. As has been discussed earlier (subsection 3.2.1), Bracher (1993) conceptualises this desire to *be* as a fundamental motivation that results in the desire to have the master signifier repeated and reproduced. He posits that this gives the subjects a sense of “substance, significance and well-being...in the eyes of the Other” when they take a position in relation to the symbolic mandate, either in agreement or disagreement with it (p. 26).

In this study, this form of desire manifests in two different ways, firstly through processes of *identification – integration* and secondly through *identification – assimilation*. The first step to both the processes is concerned with the participants’ identification with the *self* mirrored by the master signifier. The second step –

integration or *assimilation* – involve the participants’ interpretation of this idealised image in relation to other signifiers and symbolic clusters.

a. Identification – integration

In this instance, the mirror image projected by the master signifier offers the participants the possibility to integrate aspects of their fragmented *selves* from different symbolic clusters that can be aligned with the symbolic demands of the master signifier. This presents the possibility of a more complete version of themselves than the master signifier would have otherwise afforded them through negotiations of including their *a*. This desire for a more complete version of themselves underlies the participants’ transition from *a* to S_1 during primal alienation and from S_1 and S_2 in the phase of alienation (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 373).

The master signifier, in this process, is interwoven with the signifiers of the participants’ *self* and is shifted in signification to become a medium that encapsulates the participants’ notion of doing things right for the project and by implication for the organisational Other (Fink, 1995, p. 71). This enables the integration of other signifiers shaping and representing the participants (ref. Table 9). This further validates the approach to signification taken in this thesis, whereby signification is examined as a response to as well as symptomatic of lack (ref. subsection 5.2.1a).

There is a variation observed in the process of *integration* in the singular case of BA V. This study finds that BA V, besides integrating signifiers from her existing symbolic clusters, also seeks signifiers from other symbolic clusters (such as those of

making audio guides for training and facilitating defect resolutions for Underwriters) to create new signifying chains for others to identify with and participate in.

The desire to <i>be</i>		
Participant	Description (Integration into Agile's symbolic cluster...)	Reference
PO II	Signifiers from Risk Management towards signifying "good decision making"	Sub-section 8.2.1
TL III	Signifiers from Aegis' culture (such as JDI) towards signifying how to deliver efficiently	Sub-section 8.3.1
BA IV	Signifiers of "layered approach" towards translating their knowledge	Sub-section 8.2.1
BDC	Signifiers from Systems Thinking towards signifying "overarching consistency"	Sub-section 8.4
BA V	Signifiers from new symbolic clusters of Underwriters and Contractors towards signifying new knowledge	

Table 9. Signification of the desire to be through integration

Implicit in this embedded process of *identification – integration* is the desire to be recognised by the Other as someone who can deliver what it wants (Kenny, 2012) through the reproduction of the master signifier across symbolic clusters (Bracher, 1993, p. 27). This also entails serving the master signifier by remaining subjected to it symbolically and expanding its signification towards bolstering its fantasy-induced image of knowing and doing all. Such alienation of the subject in its subservience to the master signifier has another significant bearing on subjectivity. The alienation of the subject in language is, to a large extent, determined by how the participant interacts and identifies with other signifiers as representative of knowledge. Verhaeghe (2019) explains that the transition from the subject as S_1 "expands with further signifiers" into becoming S_2 and thus, appealing to the Other with her desire (p. 373). Therefore, even though this reiterative process of appealing to the Other is lacking and destined for

failure, the subject gains in this process of identifying with signifiers and symbolic clusters the resource of knowledge, which is mediated by desire (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 374).

Bracher (1993, p. 19) explains that knowledge in itself cannot drive or offer the subject access to her *a*, but it serves as a useful mechanism for navigating the symbolic oeuvres of the Other and of the master signifier by signifying her own position in it, as is illustrated by the cases of the participants mentioned in Table 9. Therefore, in responding to the author's call for attention to knowledge with respect to emotional autonomy (in subsection 2.3.2), this study posits that the participant's knowledge though pivotal to this process is contingent upon desire as its determinant. Knowledge emerges as a means to the participants' desire for the Other and a tool for the sustenance of the master signifiers' fantasy by adding to its image of wholeness through integration. This has the contribution of unpacking the complexities of knowledge in discourse beyond it being conceptualized either as a mass of unorganized signifiers that is pinned to meaning by a master signifier or as intuitive knowledge that transforms into the master signifier in the master's discourse (Lacan, 2007a, p. 22).

b. Identification – assimilation

There is a subtle but significant difference between integration and assimilation – both of which mediate the same transition of the subject from S_1 to S_2 . In the former pattern, the participants' desire to *be* is channelled to the Other through their desire to do good for the organisation. Therefore, integration serves to fill in the significatory crevices in the master signifier by integrating signifiers from other symbolic clusters.

But in *assimilation*, desire emerges as the pursuit to be signified by the master signifier, thereby subjecting the desire itself to the master signifier. Therefore, the difference between *integration* and *assimilation* lies in the orientation of the participants' desires.

In this pattern, the participants' identification with the mirror image projected by the master signifier results in them identifying with an imaginary *self* that serves their desire to be their want-to-be *self*. As a consequence, the participants assimilate the master signifier by translating their own signifiers from different symbolic clusters in accordance with it (ref. Table 10). *Assimilation*, therefore, is a process of translating the participants' signifiers in terms of the master signifier.

The desire to <i>be</i>		
Participant	Description (Assimilation into Agile's symbolic cluster)	Reference
ST II	Signifier of Test Manager in adding meaning to the Agile-based signifiers such as "Stand Up"	Sub-section 8.3.2
TL II	Translation of all problems in strictly Agile terms	Sub-section 8.2.1

Table 10. Signification of the desire to be through assimilation

The author would like to draw attention to two aspects here. The first aspect is the difference in the extent of identification with the master signifier across participants. It is evident that the participants involved in the processes of *integration* and *assimilation* differ in the aspect of desiring through the master signifier and desiring for the master signifier, respectively. This difference in desire is accounted for by the extent to which the participants identify with and subsequently depend on the symbolic mandate for the pursuance of their desires (Bracher, 1993, p. 22). Therefore, of importance here is the dynamic between identification and desire that culminates in alienation. The extent of identification during primal alienation shapes how the excess of

the participant is included or excluded in her transition from a to S_1 and from S_1 to S_2 and consequently defines the magnitude of her alienation (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 380). The extent of alienation further shapes the extent to which the participant herself is immersed in the symbolic cluster of the master signifier and can mobilise it towards signification. This is evident from the participants' ability to reproduce the master signifiers in other symbolic clusters, as can be noted in the difference between the significations of Agile by BA IV, ST II and that of TL II.

The second aspect is the role of relational others. In the discussion of identificatory processes through *integration* and *assimilation*, participants have been found to engage with others by offering them signifiers to identify with. This symbolic manoeuvre of the participants is also driven by their need for others' recognition of themselves as *that* as a validation of their desire and identifications, as has been theorised with reference to the mirror phase (Roberts, 2005, Harding, 2007, Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003). Therefore, this appeal to the Other through desires takes a "specific content and form, depending on the reactions of the significant others and the choices made by the subject-to-be..." (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 373). However, there is a variation to this pattern of *assimilation* in the case of TL II. Her signifiatory practices in prescribing the master signifier do not enable the identification of others. The participants' signification of the master signifier is limited to defining herself by it and is, therefore, more akin to *imitation* than *identification-assimilation*.

Lacan (2006) distinguishes *imitation* from identification at the stage of the symbolic, wherein the transformative aspect of identification is actualized. Imitation, in

his view, is a “partial and groping form of approximation”, whereby identification is a “virtual assimilation of development” inherent in the object of identification (Lacan, 2006, p. 71 emphasis removed). Hence, the participant caught in this pattern of approximating the master signifier is removed from understanding or imbibing its system as providing a shared language for all and as serving the Other. She thus falls short of creating opportunities for her to engage in signification with and for others. There are other ways too in which, such non-inclusion of others in the desire for self surfaces and it will be discussed with reference to the desire to *have*, in the following subsection.

9.3.2 *The desire to have*

The desire to *have* or possess the Other manifests inevitably with reference to the master signifier in this study. In one way, it surfaces as the desire to own and command the master signifier and how it is interpreted by others in SDC. And in another way, there emerges a desire to be the master signifier towards being what the Other wants. In both these forms of the desire to *have*, the participants present themselves as possessing the answers to all that the Other wants. In other words, it is the desire to be a “bearer” of the master signifier for the Other (Bracher, 1993, pp. 30 - 31). This recognition of themselves as possessors of *truth* results in the participants segregating themselves from the others who do not know their *truth*. The author examines these two patterns through processes of *identification – assertion* and *dis-identification – assertion*. Another manifestation of the desire to *have* is seen not in the desire to possess but to be possessed by the Other. In the context of this study, this form of desire surfaces limitations in the

way the participants identify and subsequently struggle to signify. This aspect is discussed with reference to *lack in identification – need for signification*.

a. Identification – assertion

In this form of the desire to *have*, the mirror image projected by the master signifier is complete with the participants' knowledge and desires (as is discussed in the previous section in terms of the effect of the master signifier's fantasy on the participants). This overwhelming identification is problematised by the plurality of signification of the master signifier which, leads to the negation of the participant's singular signification of self as the master. As a result, the participants fail to recognise the integral lack of their *a* and the subsequent need for appealing to the Other and for signifying to others by either *integrating* or *assimilating* (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 373). This approach to desire-induced identification, therefore, leads to disjointed signifying chains fractured by the inability to link their desire for the Other with the Other's desire and the tyrannical will of the master signifier (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 377). Instead, the participants (ref. first segment of Table 11) emphasise and insist upon their signification over the signifier and resist other significatory attempts based not on any merit of argument but through simple repetition of their claims (Parker, 2014a, p. 41). In other words, they seek their signification to be positioned as the truth in lieu of the existing master signifier.

The desire to <i>have</i>		
Participant	Description (Identification and Assertion of self on Agile)	Reference
ITM	As knowing how Agile functions and segregating the <i>business</i> as “customers” and “non-experts”, respectively	Sub-section 8.2.1
PM I		
BA III	As knowing the “right question” and “right answer” and as a regulator for the actions of the Underwriters	Sub-section 8.3.1
Description (Dis-identification and Assertion of self on Agile)		
BA VI	As understanding the complexity of business and as an advocate of Waterfall	Sub-section 8.3.1

Table 11. Manifestations of the desire to have through segregation

As discussed above, the participants’ assertion of themselves in language is exclusive of the need to translate or signify themselves. This is on account of the participants’ unwillingness to divest themselves of their signifiers and replace them with the master signifier and its associated secondary signifiers (Bracher, 1993). Consequently, this does not align with what is described by Lacan as a “virtual assimilation of development” in the process of identification, as mentioned earlier (2006, p. 71 emphasis removed).

ITM and PM I’s insistence on excluding the *business* in figuring how Agile should be implemented either by separating them as “customers” or as non-experts, respectively, indicates segregation from the other. Such separation of the *business* is uncharacteristic of Agile that insists upon collaboration, and contradicts the hallmark of the master signifier that offers a common language for all. Therefore, this incomplete identification with the master signifier and the assertion of the *self* (S_1) that had identified with it in the phase of primal alienation indicates the participants’ inability to transition from S_1 to S_2 in the subsequent phase of alienation (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 373).

Therefore, much like identification, the participants' alienation in the symbolic cluster of the master signifier too remains incomplete, to the effect of segregating the participants from others.

b. Dis-identification – assertion

In another manifestation of the desire to possess the Other, there emerges an incongruity between the projected mirror image and the participants' *a* in the phase of primal alienation. The participants, thereby, are positioned as S_1 in defiance of the master signifier and its demands upon them (ref. second segment of Table 11). This thesis finds that such dis-identification though conducive to subject formation in the first phase impedes the symbolic possibilities for the subject to recognise the projected *self* in the process of reproducing the master signifier for others to identify with. Furthermore, it gives rise to a feeling of aggression that results in indifference towards the master signifier and the discourses that foster it (Bracher, 1993, p. 26).

As a result of this aggression, the participants are riveted by the very need for an imaginary *self* that others recognise and which they can then signify in language and transition from S_1 to S_2 . Therefore, this need for creating her own mirror image manifests as the participants' attempt to separate the existing master signifier from the Other and position themselves as the knowers of the truth. Such dis-identification and resistance to the master signifier are symbolically pursued through the seeking of dominance for signifiers that represent the participants. Thus, resulting in the exclusion of others through the assertion of their S_1 over the master signifier.

Before proceeding to the final form of coping through the desire to *have*, the author would like to draw attention to the gaps in Lacan's typology of discourse, as is seen in this subsection thus far. The resistance to the master signifier veiled by the desire to possess the *truth* falls into the crevices of the discursive framework. While not all participants in this discursive position knowingly disavow the master signifier, they do, however, seek to substitute it with their signification (as seen in the first segment of Table 11). Therefore, the complexity of how the participants cope with the master signifier is only partially captured by the discourse of the hysteric that accounts for the participants' dissatisfaction with the master signifier and their failure in replacing it with their truth (Lacan, 2007e).

Bracher (1993, pp. 66 - 67) posits that the hysteric's discourse is characterised by the conflict and anxiety experienced by a subject on being unable to coincide her *self* with the master signifier. But the problem with the hysteric discourse, as is well known, is that it relies upon the other to produce the master signifier and sustains on the "quest of desire...the search of meaninglessness for a meaning or identity" (Bracher, 1993, p. 67). The positions of ITM and PM I differ from such characterisation of the hysteric most crucially on account of their being unaware of the conflict between their *self* (as S_1) and the master signifier. The characterisation, however, aligns with respect to the failed signifiatory attempts of ITM and PM I to dethrone the master signifier with their significations as the *truth*. As a result, the author classifies this position in discourse as that of the neo-hysteric and draws focus to the ways in which the subject barred as an effect of the master signifier is deprived of the *truth* of her own desire. For some

participants, this is seen to occur because of the aggressivity of their devotion to the master signifier.

Aggressivity, according to Lacan (2006), is coupled with narcissistic identification, which is integral to the subject's formation in the mirror phase. It arises as a difference between the subject's perceived and specular *selves* and underpins the subject's relationship with herself and with others and is thus, regulated by socio-cultural norms (Lacan, 2006, p. 85). Lemaire (1981) explains that when encountered with a relational other, this aggressivity arising from the continual coping of the subject with the tensions of the ideal mirror image results in the need to "situate (herself), to have (herself) accepted or even impose (herself)" upon the other (p. 79). The inclusion of aggressivity towards the mirror image projected by the master signifier, the author posits, accounts for why and how the hysterics/neo-hysterics are limited in their efforts to transform by formulating a new master signifier. The author by no means positions this explanation as a widely applicable explanation for the failure of a hysteric. Instead, she presents the inclusion of aggressivity as an indicator of analytical possibilities that can be explored by considering the mirror-like function of the master signifier in discourse.

c. Lack in identification – need for signification

The desire to *have*, in this instance, manifests in similar struggles to signify but on account of very different factors, namely the lack of a lucid mirror image that can elicit desire and identification in the participant. In the theory of the mirror phase (as also discussed in subsection 3.2.2), Lacan describes the process as essentially being an

identification, whereby the subject transforms upon assuming the exteriority of the mirror image (Lacan, 2006, p. 76). However, in the instance SD III (ref. Table 12), this thesis finds a lack in identification that inhibits them from assuming that mirror image despite the master signifier projecting onto them the contours of their *Agilised self* through language. The participants instead are found in the throes of the “turbulent movements” in contrast to the gestalt of the mirror image (Lacan, 2006, p. 76).

On one end, the participants are overwhelmed by the multitude of secondary signifiers proffered by the master signifier that shrouds the mirror image and, on the other, it subjugates her with a fantasy of the desired wholeness that embracing those signifiers will offer her (Bracher, 1993, p. 68). This struggle for congruity between the self and the mirror image results in a much more primal desire for sustenance by being possessed by the Other such that they can then transform into their mirrored *self*. Therefore, signification appeals to the Other manifests in the need for the significations of others to help them alienate and transition from S_1 to S_2 . Desire, in these instances, manifested as the need to *have* the signification of mediating others that can pave the way for them to the Other symbolically.

The desire to have		
Participant	Lack of identification-need for signification of Agile	Reference
D III	The need to have a “layered approach” translated and to be taught how to use VITA towards doing Agile right.	Sub-section 8.2.2

Table 12. Manifestation of the desire to have through need for signification

The need for a mediating other underpinned in the desire for *self* as possessed by the Other points to the insufficiency of desire and the inability to signify it in language to satisfaction. This further results in desire taking different forms that are directed

towards resurrecting the lost object of desire – the *self* in the mirror (Lemaire, 1981, p. 179). The participants are thus, caught in this dual process of *lack in identification* – *need for signification*. The former aspect of undefined incongruity is sought to be compensated with the aid of identification with signifiers that weave through their varied symbolic clusters and form a meaningful way of signifying themselves for the Other (ref. Table 12). It is through the process of finding meaning in the exteriority of the master signifier that the participants will find a path to transitioning to a pursuit of their own meaning and desire.

From the perspective of discourse, the participants, in this case, fall under the blanket of being inevitably subjected to and rendered powerless by the discourse of the master (Bracher, 1993, pp. 70 - 71). This aggregational approach to the recipient-subjects of discourse can be attributed to the absence of the same in the components of discourse, which include the barred subject, the *truth* of the subject, knowledge and the master signifier. The lack of a recipient-other whose desires and needs shapes subjection to the master signifier remains outside the bounds of the typology unless the master signifier is attempted to be overthrown in the discourses of the hysteric and analyst (Bracher, 1993, pp. 70 - 71).

This thesis contends the importance of delving into the symbolic absences in the typology of discourse for two reasons - examining the varied impacts of discourse on subjectivity and on intersubjective relations and bringing to the fore the mechanisms of desire in how the subjects navigate the social framework of discourse. With that in view, this role of mediation is found to form a link between the master signifier and the

participant by offering significations for the latter to identify with. As is seen in the instance of SD III seeking BA IV's signification of Agile as a "*layered approach*" (ref. subsection 8.2.1). Thus, enabling the participants to alienate more completely by building on their S_2 by drawing on the mediator's signifiers. The mediator, in this way, facilitates the reproduction of the master signifier while strengthening its fantasy-induced appeal of being holistic by filling in the gaps in its signification. Therefore, unlike the production of a new master signifier in the analyst's discourse, this discourse of mediator reproduces the same master signifier by way of integrating it with signifiers from other symbolic clusters (as discussed in the previous section with reference to *identification-integration*).

From the perspective of the mechanisms of Lacan's typology of discourse, the mediator alienated and barred by the master signifier addresses the object *a* of the other (in this thesis, this other is referenced from the accounts of SD III) towards creating new knowledge. This knowledge is derived from the signification of the master signifier and has the effect of further signifying the barred self of the mediator based upon its identification with the mirror image projected onto her by the master signifier during primal alienation. Therefore, given the continued misrecognition of the truth of her own alienation by the mediator as a subject, the discourse offers no opportunity for emancipation itself. Instead, it is posited as an alternate to the hysteric's response to the master signifier. While the discourse in itself may or may not lead to the hysterics or the analysts' position, it does, however, have the potential to lead to the reflective's discourse

(which will be presented in the next section) because of its function of addressing the *a* of others.

The discourse of the mediator also offers further insights into the interesting dimension of the other's desire that has been posited to be of crucial significance in the theory of the mirror phase (ref. subsection 3.2.2). This discursive position is founded on the integration of the desire of the mediator to transform into a self that is projected by the master signifier, with the need of the recipient to do the same. This also allows the possibility to differently interpret Lacan's view that "(t)he satisfaction of human desire is possible only when mediated by the other's desire and labor" and the absence of that medication is but a fantasy (Lacan, 2006, pp. 98; 475). Though Lacan had said this in reference to Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic (which also underpins his formulation of the discourse typology), it does have relevance in this discourse of the mediator that is less afflicted by the connotations of power in comparison to the master-slave relationship. Instead, as is seen in this study with reference to BA IV and SD III, this discourse is formed more on the need to help others in order to pursue one's own desires and on the primal need for sustenance that can only be made available by an other. Lacan describes this fundamental need for sustenance from the other very effectively in another occasion – "...man has no object that is constituted for his desire without some mediation. This is clear from his earliest needs, in that, for example, his very food must be prepared..." (Lacan, 2006, 148). Therefore, even though the mediator in this discourse is unaware of the truth of her own subjection to the master signifier, the knowledge of the

inseparability of the other from the pursuit of her desire paves the way for eventually (transitory) emancipation.

9.3.3 Section summary

The examination of the second research issue surfaces the dynamic interplay of the participants' desire to *be* or *have* the Other – underpinned by their knowledge – and the demands of the master signifier. These intricacies of desires unpack the ways in which the participants signify their knowledge to others, thereby positioning themselves in relation to O/others. The significatory patterns in the desire to *be* represents an *integrative* and *assimilative* approach to signifiers that reproduce and bolster the master signifier for others. Desire to *have* is characterised by the repetition of the participants' claims to *truth*, which has the effect of constraining the master signifier in language and segregating others. These attempts at contesting the master signifier with one's *truth* in some cases are found to point to an interdiscursive space that is classified as the discourse of the neo-hysteric.

An interesting manifestation of the desire to *have* happens through the participants *lack in identification* with the mirrored *self*. In this case, the desire to *have* the Other is more of an appeal to be possessed by the alterity through the signification of others, which can help them navigate the immensity and meaninglessness of the master signifier through the discourse of mediator.

9.4 Research Issue III - From where do the participants draw legitimacy for their articulations and how was this manifested in the relations they articulated?

The articulation of the participants was informed by the orientation of their desire and through processes of *integration*, *assimilation*, and *segregation*, as discussed above. This thesis finds that the legitimacy of these articulations is derived from the extent of the participants' alienation (underpinned by the nature of their desire for the Other) and is contingent upon the response of others. Therefore, in the investigation of this research issue, the author combines the two theoretical strains of participants traversing from primal alienation to alienation and separation (embedded with the dialectic of *being* and *thinking*) and of them signifying through the master signifier in the sociality of discourse. To this end, the author has divided the significatory processes of the participants into five forms, each of which unpacks the underlying facets of the subject's transitioning from one *self* to another by way of signifying (either from *a* to S_1 or from S_1 to S_2) and can be classified in terms of their pursuit of *being* or *thinking*.

Signification in itself is based on the participant's advent into the oeuvre of the organisational Other's symbolic cluster – the initial condition for their *being* and subsequent primal alienation (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 370). This forced *being* of the participant – despite limiting her to certain signifiers, namely the master signifier gives her access to the symbolic resources with which she can engage in identificatory and significatory processes with the possibility of engaging others in the process (Bracher, 1993, pp. 25 - 26). Such interaction of the participants with the master signifier results in them taking a distinct approach to the secondary signifiers, which form a close

association with the master signifier and adopt the same function as the latter (Bracher, 1993, p. 27). The expounding of the signifiatory patterns examined in this thesis is classified under the categories of *being in signification* (9.4.1) and *thinking in signification* (9.4.2).

9.4.1 *Being in signification*

This first category comprises three signifiatory patterns – *constrained*, *inundated* and *castrated* – and explores the participants struggles in primal alienation and in transitioning to a more complete alienation through their varied ability to integrate their *self* with the master signifier while struggling with the latter's meaninglessness.

a. *Constrained in signification*

The meaninglessness of *being* for some participants surfaces in their inability to perceive lack. They find their *a* in the mirror image projected by the master signifier to be complete and hence without the need for *integration* and *assimilation*. Instead, overcome by the congruence of the master signifier and their *a*, they perceive themselves as the knower of the *truth* and seek to be recognised as such (as has been discussed with reference to *identification – assertion* as part of the desire to *have* in subsection 9.3.2). At the level of the Symbolic, this has the effect of the participants identifying with the master signifier but without embracing or adapting the secondary signifiers that lend meaning to the symbolic mandate. This is exemplified in the participants' inability to adopt the secondary signifiers, such as treating the *business* as one of them and not as '*customers*'. Such deficient identification with the master

signifier is akin to mimicking their want-to-be *self* (S_2) as opposed to transforming themselves through alienation in the symbolic oeuvre of the Other. Devoid of the emulation of the signifiers that becoming this other *self* entails through identification, the participant is variedly restricted in her signifiatory efforts. This has the implication of inhibiting the participants' transition to first S_1 and then S_2 , which is underpinned by the drive to have the *a* recognised by the Other in language (Verhaeghe, 2019, pp. 373 - 374).

In particular, this tendency to mimic the *self* through imitation of its language captivates the participant in a “frenzy of mimicking” the wholeness of the image. The “pleasure of knowing and of dominating” leads them on to an insatiable “desire of something else” that is the fantasy of a *self* (as S_1) as opposed to the alienation of her want-to-be as S_2 (Lacan, 2006, p. 431). At the level of language, this manifests in the same effect of the participants imposing the existing symbolic resources – in this case, the master signifier – towards the same end of asserting their *self*. Consequently, at the level of the symbolic oeuvre of the Other, this prevents any changes or additions to the master signifier.

The *constrained* signification of the master signifier has a number of implications upon the master signifier, the others and the participants themselves. Firstly, the implication of such signification for others is singular – it demands of the others to submit either to them as the knower of *truth* or to the master signifier. This narrows the possibility for others to engage in identification with it and limits the

“reactions of the significant others” to the subject’s significations, which further enable her alienation (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 373).

Secondly, despite the participants’ access to the symbolic clusters of the master signifier, this constraint has an isolating effect on the participants and accentuates the lack of their being with their ignorance of the very need to *think*. The ignorance of the truth of their relationship with the Other can only be overcome with the repeated resurgence of lack, which will awaken the participant to see beyond the fantastical shroud of their fantasised *self* and examine the congruencies with their *a*, thus becoming aware of *the* master signifier’s meaninglessness (Chiesa, 2014b, pp. 176 - 177). It is this latter aspect that creates the possibilities of signification that can lead to the additions to the master signifier caused by the participant’s shifting in relation to the O/others in separation (Fink, 1995, pp. 77 - 78, Moati, 2014, p. 160).

b. Inundated in signification

The state of *being* afflicts certain participants as they struggle with the meaninglessness of the burden of signifiers emanating from the Other (Lacan, 1998d, p. 204, Moati, 2014, p. 156) and their need for semblance with those (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 372). This lack of semblance constrains the participants (discussed with reference to the *lack-in-identification – need for signification* in 9.3.2c) with the void of symbolic resources that can fill the symbolic gap between their *selves – a*, S₁ and S₂ (Tarabochia, 2014, p. 229). These limitations in their ability to use the symbolic resources impede the participants’ transition from primal alienation to alienation in the absence of secondary identification (Lacan, 2006, p. 54). The participants, therefore, are threatened by the

possibility of a *self* that they cannot signify. The author posits that this struggle for signifying a meaningful *self* is a precursor to the desire to *think* that arises from the failure in pursuing desire through signification in *being* (Moati, 2014, p. 159). Thus, this desire for *thinking* marks the onset of a shift from alienation for the subject (Lacan, 1998e, p. 221).

Inundation in signification stems from the absence of meaning and the multiplicity of signifiers impressed upon them by the enormity of the Other's desire (Fink, 1995, p. 73, Moati, 2014, p. 159). This thesis finds that such overwhelming influence on one end makes it difficult for them to put into a scheme their desires and the master and its secondary signifiers all at once. On the other end, however, this inability arises from the participants' resistance to what Lacan (1998d, p. 207) describes as being reduced to a signifier in *being* at the dint of the Other. It is this resistance that fuels the desire to *think* and search for meaning (Moati, 2014, p. 158). Unable to accomplish this pursuit on their own, the concerned participants are found to seek significations of others to help them identify and complete their transition from primal alienation to alienation by alienating in what could be their discourse of mediator (as described in subsection 9.3.2c). With respect to the O/others, this seeking of *self* manifests as the participants' restricted articulation to others that is subsumed by the tension in their relationship with the O/others on account of the exclusion of their *a*.

d. Castrated in signification

This form of signification deals with two aspects – the participants desire to *think* as explained above and dis-identification with the master signifier. In continuation of the

discussion on *dis-identification – assertion*, the participants’ disavowal of the master signifier results in them being barred from signifying through its symbolic cluster (Bracher, 1993, p. 26). Without access to the secondary signifiers, they are limited to the use of a language that no longer applies to the others subjected to the same master signifier. Therefore, this study posits that the absence of shared significations and the participants’ variance with both the master signifier and the Other limits their ability to traverse the symbolic clusters in search of meaning and *castrates* them from signifying to others. This castration is symptomatic of the participants’ ignorance of the *truth* of her intersubjective existence, which further distances them from the possibility of attaining the fleeting completeness that the knowledge of *otherness* could enable (Lacan, 2006, p. 192).

9.4.2 *Desire to think in signification*

The last two forms of significations – *manipulating* and *creating* – are rooted entirely in the desire to *think* and are thus, characterised by a shift in the participants’ relationship with the organisational Other (Moati, 2014). These, thus, represent a shift from being subjected to it in desire as *being*. A significant difference can be noted in the very way forms are titled. The phrasing of the forms in *constrained*, *inundated* and *castrated* position the participants as recipients of the Other’s actions. Whereas, in *manipulating* and *creating*, the participants are positioned as agents engaging actively in signification. The difference in the latter two forms lies in the signification being focused upon forming new significatory chains with the master signifier by equating it with their desire to fill the symbolic void in its cluster of signifiers.

a. Manipulating in signification

Manipulating in signification is a manifestation of the participants' being impelled by the fantasy to become the *self* projected onto them by the master signifier as opposed to mimicking it (Sköld, 2010). This finds the participants in the interstices of the Imaginary and the Symbolic as they seek to transition from S_1 to S_2 by furthering their alienation to the Other. This process of transforming as the *self* is implicit with the identification of the incongruences between the two fragmented *selves* which, can then be filled in with signification. Lacan (1997e) aptly describes this process as an “inchoate collection of desires” emanating from the participant's being and from the co-constructed *self* that is imposed upon her (p. 39).

In this form of *manipulating*, the shift is defined by the participants' misrecognition of the lack in the Other as themselves. Lacan (1998d), in theorising separation, had described its onset through the processes of recognition of the Other's lack and of estimation of its desires – “(a) lack is encountered by the subject in the Other, in the very intimation that the Other makes to him by his discourse...there emerges in this experience...something that is radically mappable, namely, *He is saying this to me, but what does he want?*” (p. 214 emphasis in original). As a consequence the elusive desire of the Other “is apprehended by the subject in that which, does not work, in the lacks of the discourse of the Other” and the subject positions her lack-of-being in place of what the Other needs by “choosing to be part of the Other” (Lacan, 1998e, Fink, 1995, Tarabochia, 2014, p. 229). This misrecognition of lack in the Other and of the participants' addition of *self* – though rooted in the Imaginary of seeing themselves in

the mirror of master signifier – seeds their innate desire to *think* and re-align their relationship with the Other.

At the level of *manipulating in signification*, the participants signify towards manoeuvring a symbolic space for their representative signifiers, which consequently afford a more complete image of themselves in the Other's symbolic oeuvre (Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010). This manipulation is mechanised by both the processes of *integration* and *assimilation* (ref. subsection 9.3.1) and has the effect of reproducing the master signifier either by expanding its symbolic cluster through additions of the participants' personal signifiers or by extending the application of the master signifier to other symbolic clusters (such as those of Risk Management and Aegis's culture).

The master signifier, in this form, is central to all significatory attempts of the participants and is thus, conducive to impelling others to engage and identify/dis-identify with their significations (Bracher, 1993, pp. 24 - 25, Costas and Taheri, 2012, p. 1201, Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015, p. 1004). In fact, this inclusion of other signifiers is found to be accomplished on the basis of its ability to impel others to respond to those. This is exemplified in PO II's asking others in meeting to write a "*one-pager*" on why decisions were made as a way of including signifiers from Risk Management. Also, this is evident in ST II's initiating separate Stand Ups which is made possible by the participation of other Software Testers in the team. And lastly, in TL III's positioning a contractor as an "*implant*" to facilitate the signification and inclusion of Aegis's culture in the scheme of the master signifier. This necessary engagement of the other, therefore,

illustrates Verhaeghe's point about the "reactions of significant others" and "the choices made by the subject-to-be" in shaping the participants' relationship with the Other (2019, p. 373).

b. Creating in signification

As in *manipulating*, this form of signification too is based on the perception of lack in the Other. However, in this case, the perception of lack is not limited to the perception of their absent *self*. Instead, it reaches into the symbolic absences to decipher what is lacking for the Other – inclusive of the participants' *self*, other employees, the master signifier and the project at large. This awareness of the imperfection of the master signifier is founded on the knowledge of *otherness* and of the integral need to fulfil these imperfections by signifying to others (Arnaud, 2002, Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003, Driver, 2017a).

Despite being defined by the same process of *identification – integration*, the signifiatory efforts of these participants are significantly different from those of others. That is on account of the shift in the role of the Other as a *cause* to that of a *reason* which, according to Moati (2014, p. 160), has the effect of weakening the absolute authority of the Other in forming and shaping the subject. The recognition of what the Other needs translates into an examination of what the master signifier needs to fulfil its purpose as a symbolic mandate for the project. It is as a consequence of this reformed identification with the master signifier that the participants integrate signifiers of "consistency", "Systems Thinking", and "transformation", "prototype" into the scheme of the master signifier as secondary signifiers. Fink (1995) describes this phenomenon as

the dialectization of the master signifier, whereby another signifier is brought into “some kind of relationship” with the master signifier which, alters the latter’s status as a symbolic mandate “subjugating the subject” (p. 78). The author finds that such dialectization of the master signifier, in this thesis, is achieved by the formation of a secondary signifier that complements the characteristics of the master signifier (Bracher, 1993, p. 27). However, these secondary signifiers are different from the other secondary signifiers, given the requirement of the signifier to be from “outside” the realm of the symbolic mandate in dialectization (Fink, 1995, p. 78). And the effect of this interlinking of the master signifier with a new secondary signifier is the creation of meaning through signification. This creation of meaning is implicit with the recognition of the others’ needs, fulfilment of which can lead to the growth of the Symbolic and the awareness of the lack in the Imaginary *image* of the Other and the master signifier (Moati, 2014, p. 159 - 160). This has the consequence of impelling others to identify with their significations as a way of fulfilling the symbolic void in their work.

This thesis finds that the accomplishment of dialectization of the master signifier is also based upon the participants’ knowledge of the truth of her subjectivity, which results in their decentring of themselves as the “playthings” of their thoughts (Lacan, 2006, p. 431). This decentring of *self* is exemplified through the participants' efforts in signifying to and for others with the aim of fulfilling the lack the master signifier inflicts on them. The participants, as a consequence, emerge in the Symbolic as a “spark” between signifiers, “creating a connection between them” (Fink, 1995, p. 69).

The author would like to draw particular attention to the case of BA V here, whereby the participant envisaged her role as (ref. subsection 8.4) a “*facilitator*” that would be eclipsed by the meaning she creates by forming new signifying channels to fill the gaps in the master signifier. This recognition by the participant of her own fading as *being* when emerging as a *thinking* subject is indicative of the participant’s transition towards separation (Fink, 1995, p. 79). Verhaeghe (2019) describes this passage towards separation as the subject’s “...conscious choice for and a conscious interpretation of the Other’s desire, with the subject’s own drive in the background. Such an interpretation always contains a choice for the subject itself, through which it influences its own identity formation and acquires a certain autonomy” (p. 376).

In order to extend Verhaeghe’s (2019) point about autonomy, the author would like to focus on the surfacing of the participants’ actions in these two forms of signification. The autonomy underpinning their significations does not translate into their freedom from the structuring effects of the Symbolic and the all-encompassing Imaginary (Fink, 1995, p. 79). Instead, it is defined by the participants’ autonomy in *thinking* and seeking meaning. The actualisation of such autonomy is made possible by the pre-condition of re-aligning the subject’s relationship with the Other, whereby the Other is no longer the supreme-mover but a stimulant for the participants’ urge for meaning (Moati, 2014, pp. 160 - 161). The author terms this symbolic position of the participants in relation to the Other, knowledge and master signifier, as the discourse of the reflective.

Informed by the knowledge of her excluded self and accepting of her position as a subject barred by the master signifier and the Other at large, the participant addresses the lack in the master signifier to create the knowledge that the master signifier lacks. The thesis has earlier mentioned the limitations in the way knowledge is denoted in discourse - which often is limited to tacit knowledge. This thesis had, therefore, approached knowledge in the broader sense of the term to encompass not only tacit knowledge but also the knowledge of otherness (ref. subsection 4.2.1d). The reflective's discourse adds another layer to the nuances of knowledge in discourse – knowledge of the symbolic absences in the master signifier and, by implication, in the others (such as the hysterics) who are subjected to it. The value of this discourse lies in creating new knowledge by connecting two previously unlinked signifiers that supplement as well as counter the power of the master signifier by addressing its lack (Fink, 1995, pp. 78 - 79). Thus, creating a shift in the participants' relationship with the very forces of its subjection - from cause to reason (Moati, 2014, p. 160). This also demonstrates the possibilities of countering the power and hold of the master signifier without the need to overthrow it, as is suggested by the analyst's discourse (Lacan, 2007f, p. 106 - 107). Furthermore, in the process of seeking their own emancipation through serving others, the participants overcome the need to use others as “stepping stones” (Verhaeghe, 1995, p. 13).

9.4.3 Section summary

A discussion of the third research issue posits that the legitimacy in the articulation of the participants is derived from their desire for the Other and the master

signifier and is dependent upon the response of others. The discussion is based upon the integration of the theories of alienation and separation with the embedded process of signifying the master signifier in discourse. The section is divided into two categories of *being in signification* and *thinking in signification*. The first category presents the participants' limitations in signifying the master signifier to others and delegitimisation of signification by the master signifier. The second category captures the participants' coping with the meaninglessness of the master signifier through their desire to *think*. This desire is pursued through varied attempts at reproducing the master signifier, which create an opportunity for others to identify with their significations and legitimacy is found in others towing the line of such significations. Of significance here is the aspect of dialectization of the master signifier that by presenting a secondary signifier aids the former and has the same identificatory appeal for others to identify with. This shift through dialectization is termed as the discourse of the reflective that supplements the lack in the master signifier and creates meaning for all.

The reflective's discourse arises from the positioning of the participant's *a* in the position of the truth. The excess of the reflective's self here encompasses the knowledge of her primal desire for the Other, and therefore, the articulations of the subject in this discourse are a struggle to create that totality by synergising the needs and desires of the subject with that of the others, the master signifier and the organisational Other at large.

9.5 Chapter summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present a theoretically informed reflection on the findings and how those address the research issues outlined in this thesis. The first

research issue dealt with the participants' orientation into the socio-symbolic order of the project through their primal alienation to the Other in the university discourse. By way of outlining the parallels between the participants' subjection to the university and primal alienation to the Other, this section lays out the foundation for the participants' encounter and subsequent identification with the master signifier.

The second research issue focused on the participants' coping with the unfolding significations of the master signifier through the compass of their desires. Such desire was theorised as being pivotal to determining the participants' relationship with the Other, either as the desire to *be* or *have* the Other through an interplay of the master signifier and their knowledge. Though focused on the participants' relationship with the Other, the discussion was inevitably salient with the presence of relational others who are positioned and often impelled by the integration of knowledge and the master signifier. While the third research issue deals with this aspect in greater detail from the perspective of legitimacy of articulations, this section makes an important contribution to identifying an interdiscursive space, signified here as the discourses of the mediator and of the neo-hysteric.

The third research issue is focused on how the legitimacy for the participants' articulation is derived from the response of others. The ability to elicit a response from others is derived from the participants' configuration of their desire for the Other, knowledge and the master signifier. The integration of secondary signifiers that aid the reproduction and re-creation of the master signifier as the Other's desire by appealing to others are posited to characterise the pursuit of emotional autonomy. This is captured

through the categories in subsection 9.4.2, with the latter being closer to the desired *self*. The significance of this section, therefore, lies in the theorisation of the participants' dialectization of the master signifier that is intended towards addressing the lack in the O/others and the master signifier at large by going beyond the need for their *selves*. The *selves*, instead, is found in *otherness* in the discourse of the reflective.

This chapter thus paves the path for theorising emotional autonomy through the conceptual resources of the participants' fragmented *selves*, the master signifier, their desire and knowledge and the O/others in the next and concluding chapter of the thesis. The theorisation draws upon the participants' primal alienation and the struggles to alienate.

CHAPTER 10 | CONCLUSION

10.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter concludes this thesis by providing an overview of the research objectives and contributions of this thesis. Section 10.2 presents a summarization of how the thesis has answered the research question with reference to the research issues, the literature, the conceptual framework and the findings derived from this multi-method study and the discussions. Section 10.3 synthesises the insights summarised in the former section to present a theorisation of emotional autonomy. Section 10.4 elucidates the contributions of this thesis to theory, its implication for practice and future research. The chapter ends by presenting the limitations of this study in section 10.5.

10.2 Examination of the research question

The purpose of this section is to answer the principal research question of how employees pursue a sense of emotional autonomy in the context of organisational change. In agreement with the literature (Stavrakakis, 2008, p. 1050, Essers, Böhm and Contu, 2009, p. 130, Fotaki, 2009, p. 144, Glynos, 2010, p. 15), this research has found that the relationship between organisational change and employees' subjectivities is based on the demands the former makes on the employees to invest their attachments and desires to it. This subjection by organisational change is systematised through a master signifier that functions as a symbolic mandate that seeks to take control of what the employee does, believes in and wants (Fotaki, 2009, p. 149, Kenny, 2009, pp. 217, 219). This has been strongly illustrated in this thesis by the functioning and mechanisms of Agile as a master signifier in the digital transformation of SDC and its impact on the

subjectivities of the participants. Therefore, the examination of how the participants pursued a sense of emotional autonomy was largely centred around their relationship with the master signifier.

This thesis finds that the struggle for emotional autonomy, embedded in the socio-symbolic cluster of organisational change and subjected to the authority of the master signifier, is characterised by the three phases of primal alienation, alienation and separation; with separation being the closest to an emotionally autonomous position (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 381). The mechanisms of these three phases are woven into the participants' relationships with the O/others, the master signifier and their own desires (underpinned by knowledge), as has been laid out in the conceptual framework in Chapter 5.

Informed by a Lacanian approach, the study had departed from the conception of the participants being inevitably subjected to the organisational Other (Stavrakakis, 2008, Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015, Driver, 2021) and their relational others such as their managers, mentors, colleagues and clients (Arnaud, 2002, Harding, 2007, Sköld, 2010, Roberts, 2005) through the structuring role of the Symbolic and the lure of the Imaginary. In the detailed discussion of these aspects in chapters 3 and 4, the potential for an autonomous position in the intersubjective relations was purported to be found in the knowledge of the *otherness* of their existence as a condition to their subjectivity – as has already been acknowledged in the literature (Arnaud, 2002, Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003, Driver, 2010) and in theory (Verhaeghe, 2019, Moati, 2014).

In extension of the theoretical tenet of the knowledge of *otherness* as leading the path to autonomy, this thesis has explored and examined the psychological mechanisms that are pivotal to understanding -

- ~ the struggle towards gaining this knowledge of *otherness*
- ~ the signficatory mechanisms of articulating such knowledge
- ~ the impact it has on the participants' relationships with O/others.

These mechanisms, outlined in the conceptual framework, go to the very heart of how participants struggled in their desire for a distinct sense of self and to articulate that desire to others. The empirical examination of this conceptual framework was conducted through a multi-method study that enabled the author to immerse herself in the context and know the symbolic world of the participants as well as do all that it takes to gain insights into the participants' subjectivities (Watson, 2008; Ybema *et al.*, 2009; Cunliffe, 2010; Sköld, 2010; Kenny, 2012; Skinner, 2012; Ybema and Horvers, 2017) while being guided by their accounts (Arnaud, 2012). The study was conducted over a period of 4 months and involved methods of non-participant observations (Flick, Kardorff and Steinke, 2004; Williams, 2008) and interviews (conducted longitudinally) (Hermanowicz, 2013). The fieldwork had led to the observation of 181 meetings and a little more than 40 hours of audio-recorded data gathered from 58 interviews conducted with 36 participants.

The data was analysed using a reiterative process of coding (Saldana, 2013; Charmaz, 2014), and it had led to the formation of two code categories – *Subjective* and *Contextual*. The *Subjective* category consisted of three primary code clusters, each

capturing how the participants were positioned in relation to O/others, the master signifier and their own fragmented *selves*. The *Contextual* category too comprised of three primary code clusters, which pertained to the participants' nature of work and the problems and challenges they identified and encountered in their everyday work lives.

The findings built upon these code categories surface three key aspects. First, that *Agilisation*, which entails the contextualising as well as subjectivising of Agile, is a continual process wherein the participants are continually interpreting and signifying what it means to be Agile in Aegis (Stavrakakis, 2008, Fotaki, 2009). This process is enabled by the continual identification with the master signifier, which arises from the need and search for semblance in the symbolic mandate, and subsequently leads to alienation into its symbolic order. An examination of this aspect found the participants in varying extents of identification with (and at times imitation of) the master signifier (ref. section 8.2).

Interestingly, such *Agilisation* of the participants, in several instances, was not limited to their adapting to Agile but also extended into fostering their significations of the master signifier for others to follow. This aspect of fostering their significations for others is found to be principally enabled by the integration of the knowledge derived from different symbolic clusters of the participants with that of the master signifier (Bracher, 1993, pp. 24, 55) (ref. subsection 8.2.2). However, such signification and reproduction of Agile were found to be embedded with their own struggles and intricacies.

The struggles of signifying Agile to others manifested in the participants finding a new *self* projected by the master signifier, which impelled them to signify it through mobilisation of their knowledge and desires. The main challenge of such integration pertained to the participants' ability and desire to integrate with other symbolic clusters, which further determined the possibility for others to identify with these significations (Harding, 2007, Sköld, 2010). In another instance, the participants were impelled by the lack of their *self* in the projections of the master signifier and were driven to position their knowledge and desires as what the master signifier and the organisational Other needed to fulfil their lack (Tarabochia, 2014) (ref. subsections 8.3.1 and 8.3.2). Additionally, the participants were also found as afflicted by their inability to identify the lack in the master signifier and the Other, which tormented them and found them misappropriating lack onto others (Hoedemaekers, 2010), in what this thesis characterises as the discourse of a neo-hysteric (subsections 8.2.1 and 8.3.1).

More importantly, as evidence of how the knowledge of *otherness* manifests, this thesis finds evidence of a signifiatory approach that catered not to the master signifier's demand for reproduction (Bracher, 1993, p. 24) or to the desire for semblance in the former's oeuvre (Verhaeghe, 2019, pp. 378 - 379). Instead, the participants were led by the recognition of lack in the master signifier and the Other (Lacan, 1998d), and they strove to serve this lack by expanding the signification of Agile through *integration* (ref. section 8.4 and subsection 9.3.1). Such *integration* is crucial and unique, for it does not serve the participants' desire for a certain *self* alone. Instead, it aligns the participants'

desire for their want-to-be *self*, their knowledge with the needs of the master signifier and the O/others.

a. The role of primal alienation and alienation

The findings led to vital insights into how the participants alienated in SDC and into their struggles for a distinct sense of self enabled by the knowledge of *otherness*. The study found that engaging in identificatory processes with the new organisational change and re-defining themselves through – submission to or disavowal of – the master signifier had the implication of the participant alienating to the symbolic cluster of SDC and Agile. (This was discussed in section 9.2 with reference to how the participants orientated themselves to the socio-symbolic context of SDC.)

In the course of this primal alienation, the excess of the participants' *selves* – symptomatised by the signifiers of their previous job roles and symbolic associations – was excluded, and the participants were tasked with the charge of re-defining and pursuing their want-to-be *self* in relation to the mirror image projected by the master signifier (Verhaeghe, 2019, pp. 370 - 371). This suggests that the process of organisational change for the participants not only entailed subjection and investment of attachments (Stavrakakis, 2008, Essers, Böhm and Contu, 2009) but also involved a continued alienation that took place as the participants traversed across different symbolic clusters in the organisational Other. Thus, alienation emerges as a process of arriving in and identifying with changeful discourses and their associated symbolic clusters. However, this process is not without its indeterminacies (as has been

expounded in section 9.3), and these manifest as challenges in the participants' transition from primal alienation to near-complete alienation.

The passage to alienation is theorised in this study to be dependent upon the extent of the participant's immersion into the symbolic cluster of SDC and is defined by the configuration of the participant's desires and knowledge with the master signifier (ref. sections 9.3 and 9.4). In coping with the fragmented *selves* that the socio-symbolic cluster of organisational change did not recognise or have a place for, the participants faced the challenge of balancing and aligning these excluded *selves (a)* with the master signifier.

The failures and challenges in such balancing of *selves* impeded the process of alienation, and some participants were constrained in primal alienation. This had the impact of limiting their access to the signification of the master signifier and to others, thereby hindering their pursuit of the desire for emotional autonomy. As alienation to the symbolic oeuvre of SDC and the Other was indispensable to their formation as subjects, which further gave them access to the symbolic resources to seek autonomy from the formative discourses that subjected them (Moati, 2014, p. 158, Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 370).

A solution to the challenges of being restricted in primal alienation was found in this research in the form of the need for the discourse of mediator. The need for the discourse of mediator – that can bridge the significatory gaps between the master signifier and participants' desires and knowledge (ref. subsection 9.3.2) – arose from the participants' inability to signify despite their identification with the master signifier.

This thesis extends the understanding of this struggle by unpacking and underscoring the lack in the process of identification, which inhibits the transformation it is supposed to impel in the subject by helping them transition from one *self* to another (Lacan, 1991b, Lacan, 2006). This, therefore, points to the insufficiencies in identification as a psychical mechanism and outlines the importance of knowledge and the need to extend the participant's knowledge through signification (Bracher, 1993, pp. 55 - 56).

To summarise this aspect, the inevitability of primal alienation and the challenge of complete alienation capture the arrival and subjection of the participant in a symbolic cluster (Verhaeghe, 2019). And signification and identification become the mechanism for her to firstly alienate by aligning her desire, knowledge and the master signifier⁵⁶. The struggles in such formation are met with the need for dependence on others that can help the participant alienate through their significations. Secondly, these fundamental identificatory and signifiatory mechanisms, through manipulation and mobilisation of signifiers, offer the participant a limited but significant scope for resisting determination by the master signifier and striving to articulate her own knowledge and desires throughout her pursuit (Fink, 1995, p. 76).

b. The role of the self-other dialectic and separation

Primal alienation and alienation, thus, conceptualise the subject's relationship with the organisational Other, which impels the participants to be subjected to the master signifier of Agile in pursuance of its desire for organisational change. There is, however, another aspect of this subject-Other relationship that is crucial to the examination of

⁵⁶ This differs from Sköld's (2010) configuration of desire, fantasy and knowledge (p. 364).

emotional autonomy – the role of the manifestation of the Other as relational others (Arnaud 2002). The relational others have been recognised in the literature for their role for bestowing upon the subject the recognition of her *self* in the Symbolic (Harding, 2007), for the dynamics of power and control that underlie these self-other relationships (Roberts, 2005) and, therefore, for the mutuality in the subject positions of the subject and her others, whereby a shift in the position of one implies a shift in the other (Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003, Ekman, 2013, Hoedemaekers, 2010, Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010, Arnaud, 2002, Driver, 2021, Kenny, 2012, Costas and Taheri, 2012). This thesis finds that the intersubjectivity of the self-other relationship - beyond being characterised by the need for recognition, power and control, and mutuality - is embedded with the contestation of desires which has had varied impacts on the participants in this study.

The initiation of organisational change in Aegis through the formation of SDC and the introduction of Agile as a master signifier impelled all employees to a journey of lending meaning and substance to the change (Essers, Böhm and Contu, 2009) through, as this thesis finds, alienating in its symbolic oeuvre and creating significations (Bracher, 1993). The sociality of such alienation, therefore, led the participants and their others to find a semblance of the master signifier with their *selves*. This struggle for semblance manifested as a contestation of desires based upon the differing points of view on what it means to *be* Agile and how the master signifier should be followed. These varied desires for the master signifier were found to have the following impact on the participants –

- i. challenged or restricted by others' significations of the master signifier
- ii. positioned or subjugated by others' significations of the master signifier
- iii. enabled by lack of signification of others or lack in the significations of others.

These impacts of the significations of others shaped the extent of the participants' ability to identify with it through an alignment with their desires and knowledge and also defined the network of relationships they formed and from whom they sought to disassociate and attach themselves towards being emotionally autonomous. Therefore, this thesis claims that subjection and resistance to the desires of others plays a significant role in how the subject manoeuvres her relationship with the others (Arnaud, 2002, Kenny, 2012, Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015). Though related to the mechanisms of self-other relationship recognised in the literature as mentioned above, this claim adds more nuance to this dialectic by positioning the other as a subject with her own lack, desires and fantasies and whose voice extends beyond recognising or disregarding the subject. Furthermore, this perspective underscores the impossibility of detachment (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986) and the fallacies of attachment (Ryan and Lynch, 1989) as upheld in the two theoretical approaches to emotional autonomy (ref. section 2.3).

While the contestation of desires problematises the pursuit of the desire for emotional autonomy, it also emphasises the importance of gaining legitimacy for signification in order to attain such emancipation. As has been discussed in section 9.4, this thesis contends that legitimation is derived from the participants' ability to impel the other to identify with their significations. This ability to impel identification is, thus,

dependent upon aligning one's own desires with the needs and desires of others. This has been evidenced in this study through the participants' signification of secondary signifiers (ref. subsections 9.4.1 (a) and 9.4.2) that supplement the significations of the master signifiers and extend its symbolic cluster. Such signification is crucial to aligning the desires of self, O/others' and the master signifier's (Bracher, 1993, pp. 27 - 28). The secondary signifiers not only reproduce the master signifier and expand its reach (Bracher, 1993) but also enable the possibility for addressing the contestation of desires by considering the needs of others (Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003). This recognition is, therefore, analogous to the conceptualisation of the knowledge of *otherness* as it entails serving the needs of the O/others (Driver, 2010). But in this thesis, the creation of signification for others was not always found to be based on the recognition of lack in the Other, and hence, it is indicative of a passage towards such realisation of truth and separation from O/others through further encounters with lack (Moati, 2014, pp. 159 - 160, Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 371).

This thesis claims to have found compelling indications of how participants' knowledge of *otherness* can pave a path to separation in the instance of two participants, who signified to address the lack in the O/others and in the master signifier. Two participants strove to address the lack and need of O/others and consequently in the master signifier by dialectizing the master signifier by bringing into its cluster new secondary signifiers (Fink, 1995, p. 78). This dialectization had the impact of decentering the master signifier (even if to a small extent) from the seat of unquestioned

authority by positioning secondary signifiers as what the Other needed to successfully implement the change (ref. section 9.4.2).

c. The role of dialectization and the discourse of the reflective

This dialectization of the master signifier has four significant implications for the examination of emotional autonomy. First, it altered the participants' relationships with the Other. The Other that was the cause of their alienation was re-positioned as a reason for their signification (Moati, 2014, p. 160). Second, it offers empirical substantiation of how knowledge of *otherness* manifested symbolically in relation to O/others. Third, it also offers *an* explanation of how separation can be attained. But more significantly, for this thesis, dialectization of master signifier enables the theorisation of a new discourse that aligns with the pursuit of the desire for emotional autonomy, as will be further expanded upon in the next section.

10.3 Re-conceptualisation of emotional autonomy

Emotional autonomy as a desire for a distinct self that can act and decide independently of others (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986, p. 841, Noom, Dekovic and Meuss, 1999, p. 772, Noom, Dekovic and Meuss, 2001, Kudo, Longhofer and Floersch, 2012, p. 349) can be recognised in this thesis in the participants' struggles for their own significations of Agile and their *Agilised self*. Through the examination of the desire for emotional autonomy in this study, the author posits that the theorisation of its pursuit depends upon its legitimisation by others (ref. section 9.4). There is an apparent contradiction in this theoretical position that the legitimisation of the desire for autonomy through the acknowledgement of others. This apparent contradiction has been

deconstructed in this thesis by centralising the significance of the knowledge of *otherness* (ref. subsection 5.2.2).

The author had argued that the ability to act and decide for oneself is intricately bound with the subject's knowledge – an aspect that has been left largely unaccounted for and unexplored for its relationship with emotional autonomy (ref. subsections 2.2.3 and 2.3.2). This thesis has found the conceptualisation of knowledge in its relationship to emotional autonomy extend beyond tacit knowledge and into the realisation of the *truth* of the subject's inextricable relationship with the O/others (Arnaud, 2002, Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003, Driver, 2009b, 2017a). Therefore, the desire for emotional autonomy is based on the lack of the subject's liberation from the others and on the knowledge of this lack (Verhaeghe, 2019, pp. 385 - 386). The apprehension of this lack enables the subject to shift in relation to her O/others and be fleetingly emancipated of the void that the Other impresses upon her (Lacan, 1998d, p. 214) and which the others' accentuate (as manifestations of the radical alterity). Therefore, in other words, the pursuit for emotional autonomy does not emerge in this thesis as the desire to be emancipated of the O/others but of the desire to be liberated of the lack (of knowledge) that they perpetuate.

The nature of the desire for such emotional autonomy can be evidenced from the dialectization of the authority wielded by the master signifier and from the shifting of the Other as a cause to a reason for the subject's significations in separation (Fink, 1995, Moati, 2014, Verhaeghe, 2019). Separation has been paralleled with the concept of individuation (ref. subsection 2.2.1), which captures the subject's "assuming a more

independent position” (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 381) and is deemed to be instrumental to the pursuit of emotional autonomy (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986).

From the perspective of the knowledge of *otherness* being integral to the desire for emotional autonomy, the legitimisation of this desire is dependent upon two aspects – the subject’s signification to O/others in an effort to compensate for the lack in their relationships and the other’s response to that signification. This thesis has found evidence for this through the identification of the discourses of the mediator and the reflective, the latter of which is represented in the figure below.

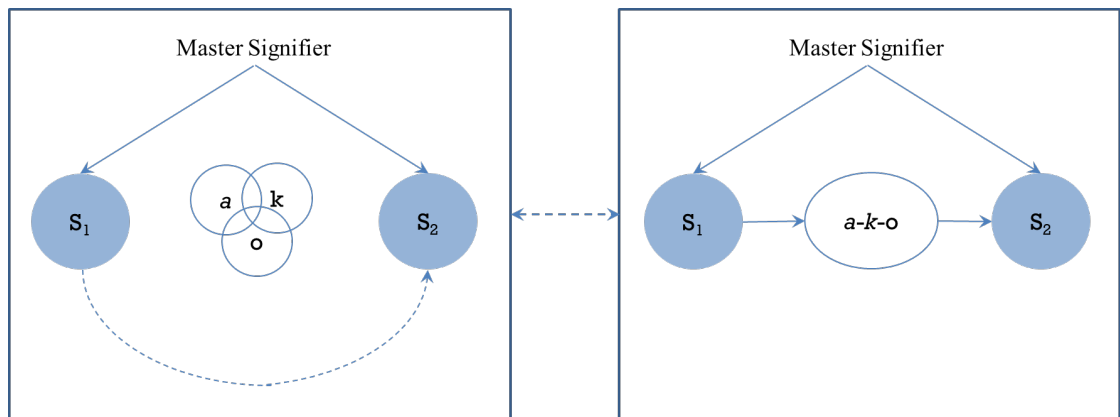


Figure 13. Alienation to separation through the discourse of the reflective

The enablement of these discursive positions has been rooted in the participants’ ability to cope with their alienation (ref. section 9.3). Though based on the knowledge of the need to address others towards the signification of their want-to-be *self*, the discourse of the mediator herself remains unaware of the indispensable lack that destines the failure of the Agile and of the associated process of organisational change (Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007). Therefore, still subjected to the fantasy of the master signifier, the subject in this discourse will need to encounter the lack in their *being* to transition into *thinking* through further alienation in the symbolic oeuvre of the Other.

This transition into *thinking* is captured in the discourse of the reflective that arises from the awareness of the lack in the O/others and the inevitability of the master signifier, supplemented by the need to address the void towards the pursuit of a more fulfilling *self* as S₂. The discourse of the reflective thus exemplifies how separation manifests in relation to O/others and the master signifier and through the integration of the participants' *a*, knowledge (*k*) and relationship with others (*o*) in a singular scheme (ref. Figure 13). The representation of the discourse of the reflective in the figure above also has a subtle implication for the nature of knowledge. The author suggests that the knowledge of *otherness* is only attained upon the alignment of the subject's S₁, *a* and relationship with others (as is depicted in the right-hand side of the figure. It is only then that the knowledge (depicted as *k*) is attained by the subject, which results in her temporal transition to S₂.

The author is cautious of not suggesting the reflective's position as being an exception to lack. The reflective is destined to be split again at the dint of the meaning created by her transitioning from *being* to *thinking*. Yet it is important to recognise that by the very return of the subject to *being* is the possibility of the apprehension of the Other's lack is created (Fink, 1995, pp. 45 - 46, Moati, 2014, pp. 162 - 163). Therefore, emotional autonomy is only captured in the temporal frames of creating meaning for her *self*, the master signifier and the O/others.

10.4 Contributions of this research

Apart from the contribution of the conceptual framework discussed in the previous section in relation to its suitability for the research objectives of this thesis, this

study claims to have made contributions to both Lacanian theory and literature in organisation studies and practice—this section details each of these contributions under three categories in the following subsections.

10.4.1 Contributions to theory and literature

This thesis contributes to theory in three ways – firstly, by re-theorising autonomy from a psychoanalytic perspective, it indicates the potential of examining autonomy as a desire. Secondly, it offers a new perspective to the theory of the mirror phase by scrutinising the significance of the subject’s fragmented *selves*. Thirdly, to the theory of discourse as social relations, this thesis lends the value of examining interdiscursive spaces, which can offer a renewed perspective to existing research and re-shape the conceptual foundations used in studies of discourse from a Lacanian perspective. These aspects are unpacked in detail below.

a. Emotional autonomy

Autonomy has been rightfully positioned in poststructuralist and psychoanalytical literature as an illusion (Roberts, 2005, Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). However, this setting aside of the concept as illusory and unattainable has led to relegating the importance of the need and desire for independence from others in the subjects. As with any lack, this impossibility of autonomy had created the symbolic caveat for redefining what autonomy would mean from a Lacanian perspective (Driver, 2009b, 2017b). The desire to act and decide for oneself is not uncommon to human beings, more specifically to employees. Therefore, this thesis has examined the dynamics involved in pursuing this desire and how those inform the subject’s *selves*.

Another contribution of theorising emotional autonomy from a psychoanalytic perspective is to offer a framework for analysing subjectivity. Subjectivity in organisation studies has become ubiquitous to the construction of an employee's sense of self and is rarely ever defined (Driver, 2008). However, the construction of this sense of self can entail a broad spectrum of things. Arnaud and Vidaillet (2017), for instance, propose approaching subjectivity in the workplace through the conceptualisation of work as a process of desiring. In a similar way, this thesis proposes the desire for emotional autonomy as a perspective to examining subjectivity by focusing on the subject's relationship with the organisational Other and her relational others. Emotional autonomy can, thus, help understand how the subject is continually shaped by her desire for the Other by striving to attain a configuration of her desire with that of others. The contestation of desires discussed above and the alignment of desires attained in the struggle for separation offers a more nuanced perspective to understanding the intersubjective existence that goes beyond the power and control implicit in the subject's need for recognition from the other (as posited by Roberts, 2005, Kenny, 2012, Ekman, 2013) (ref. Figure 13).

b. The role of knowledge in discourse as social relations

The contribution to the Lacanian theory of discourse is underpinned by the empirical insights of this thesis, as will be discussed in this and the next subsection. First, based on the findings of the study, the author presents a different conceptualisation of knowledge in discourse. Costas and Taheri (2012, pp. 1206 - 1207), Vidaillet and Gamot (2015, p. 1005) posit that the employee's dependence on the other (such as the

master/leader) for signification is antithetical to emancipation. The author contends that while the assumption of co-relating signification and emancipation is legitimate, the dependence on others for knowledge is not entirely unfavourable to emotional autonomy and has some intricacies. In the thesis, this is exemplified by the participants' seeking a mediating discourse. The seeking of other's knowledge, though classifies as the need for dependence, it has the potential to be emancipatory by being a prelude to the participants' perception of lack in the master signifier and the Other, which creates the need in the first place.

Sköld (2010, p. 364) had examined the co-relation between signification and dependence on others by adding to its scheme the concepts of desire and fantasy. The research had approached the analyst's discourse as temporarily aligning the subject's knowledge and desire for recognition. This thesis builds on this configuration of knowledge and desire by expanding the purview of the subject's knowledge and consequently including into its desire the desire of others (beyond the subject's need for their recognition) towards outlining this position as the discourse of a reflective. The discourse of the reflective expands Lacan's (2007a, p. 27) conceptualisation of knowledge in discourse beyond *savoir-faire* (tacit knowledge) to include the knowledge of the *truth* of otherness and enables the subject to form a different relationship with the master signifier and the Other (Fink, 1995, p. 78).

c. Interdiscursive spaces in the typology of discourse

This thesis contributes to the Lacanian theory of discourse and the associated literature in organisation studies by illustrating the potential of examining interdiscursive

space in the discourse typology. Lacan, as mentioned in chapter 4, had not intended for the theory of discourse to be an exception to lack. Fink (1995) also concludes in his interpretation of the Lacanian discourse theory that “‘the four discourses’ are not the only discourses imaginable” (p. 145). While the four distinct positions in the discourse typology are significant for elucidating the functions and objectives of other discourses, these four positions facilitate certain ends and hinder others (Fink, 1995, pp. 130, 145). In agreement with Fink’s perspective, this thesis finds that the command of the discourse of the master and the subjecting influence of the university create the necessity for mediation and reflection for others – abilities that are restricted from the hysteric and the analyst.

By including the discourse of the reflective and of mediator, this thesis intends to bring into the fold of discourse typology the possibility to examine other desired ends, such as those of reflecting on and mediating the mandates of the master signifier towards serving the needs of O/others. In organisations, this can be exemplified through the presence of mentors and coaches who guide the employees in the process of aligning their professional growth with the organisation’s strategy and goals, both formally and informally (Ladyshevsky, 2010, pp. 293 - 294). In light of this, the author finds the surfacing of these interdiscursive spaces to be pivotal to understanding the employee’s relationship with the master signifier and the organisational Other at large.

With respect to the literature, the introduction of these two discourses has the contribution of evading the tendency to examine discourse as an individualistic pursuit to signify a master signifier, bereft of the influence of others (as is found in the research

of Kosmala (2012)). But as a more significant contribution, the author suggests that the discourse of reflection is more congruent with Costas and Taheri (2012, pp. 1210 - 1211) objective to find a discursive position that aligns with authentic leadership. The researchers had proposed that this alignment is achieved by the discourse of the analyst, who assumes the position of a relational other and guides the followers in their passage through the master signifier. As has been mentioned earlier in this thesis, the analysts' discourse is essentially self-serving and doesn't account for the needs of others (Verhaeghe, 1995, p. 13). The discourse of the reflective compensates for those shortcomings by creating a new secondary signifier that helps others navigate the master signifier. Such application of the discourse of reflective with relation to authentic leadership also has the significant effect of emphasizing emotional autonomy as the subject's ability to act and decide for others. In addition, it indicates the scope for further examination of emotional autonomy in other contexts.

c. Re-thinking the theory of mirror phase

This thesis makes three contributions to the empirical exploration of the theory of the mirror phase. Firstly, by examining the mirroring properties of the master signifier, it brings to the fore the subtle mechanisms by which the master signifier impacts the subject's *being* by projecting a different *self* onto them. This has the effect of surfacing the nuances of subjectivity that are found in the subject's passage between these two fragments of herself, as is exemplified through the various ways in which the participants are found to approach this fragmentation of their being, in section 9.2. On one end, this has led to subjective responses of becoming this other *self* by mimicking,

which implies a flawed identification with the image (Lacan, 2006, p. 431) and disables them from completely alienating in the Symbolic (Verhaeghe, 2019, p. 373) and from having the opportunity to integrate their other *selves* in their signification of themselves as the mirror image. On the other end, the thesis has also found evidence of the struggle to find a sense of *self* in the extimacy of the mirror image. This lack of semblance, as will be expounded further below, has resulted in the struggle to seek and signify a different *self*. This surfaces the possibility of the participants' *seeking* oneself in the mirror resulting in the failure to *find* - a possibility that was left unaccounted for by Roberts (2005, p. 635).

In the light of the above two patterns, the author contends the need to deconstruct the assumptions of the subject's alienation in the mirror phase and the implied identification with the mirror image. In one of his lectures on the mirror phase, Lacan (2006) elaborated that the subject upon encountering her mirror image essays through "insufficiency to anticipation...(to) fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body" to form a sense of totality that will finally lead to the subject's alienation and thus, structure her sense of self (p. 78). Also embedded in this essay are the "phantoms" of the subject's fears, anxieties, and all that comprises the "world of (her) making" (pp. 76 - 77). While forming that image of totality is coherent with the participant finding an alignment between her desires and knowledge (which comprise the world of her making), the process is necessarily flawed by *insufficiencies*, *anticipations* and the *other phantoms*. The effort in this thesis, therefore, has been directed towards those challenges that inhibit alienation. This thesis has found strong evidence to indicate that alienation

and identification, much like the mirror phase, are susceptible to lack and examining those can offer deep insights into how the subject copes with and traverses across her fragmented *selves* (as has been discussed with reference to the second and third research issues in Chapter 9).

Secondly, this thesis indicates the necessity to look beyond this fundamental need as semblance in itself does not enable the participant to identify with her mirrored *self*. Lacan (2006) posits that the resolution of the problematic difference between the mirror image and the subject is enabled by the latter's realisation of the "unity" represented by the image and of the difference between herself and the extimacy of the image, which eventually results in the subject's withdrawal from "mimicking the image's suggestions" (p. 68). This is illustrated with reference to mimicking the *self* (subsection 9.2.2), wherein it is found that the participants' ability to transform is based on her recognition of the difference between the subject's *being* and *self*. This contribution surfaces the cause behind the subject's slips in significations of the ideal *self* that are otherwise chalked up to lack (as in the research of Hoedemaekers (2010) and Driver (2009b)).

Thirdly, accounting for the difference between the participants' *being* and *self* surfaces their struggles in transforming through identification or in remaining restricted to their *being* through dis-identification (Verhaeghe, 2019, pp. 372 - 373). Such examination of the difference between the fragments of *selves* has two implications. First, it accounts for the subjective struggles in signification, the need for which was indicated in the review of Harding (2007) and Hoedemaekers and Keegan (2010) in

Chapter 3. The author contends here that examining the subject's *being* as split across signifiers without considering how she copes with those and strives to become a certain *self* in the process offers only a partial view of the subjective struggles.

10.4.2 Contribution to methodology

a. Non-participant observation in psychoanalytical studies of organisations

The contribution of this thesis to research methodology is based on illustrating the potential of (ethnographically inspired) non-participant observations for psychoanalytic research. In this study, the author's objective was to immerse herself in the socio-symbolic context of the participants' work life and to be guided by the accounts of the participants (Arnaud, 2012, p. 1126). Kenny (2012, p. 1190) had claimed that ethnographic studies based on Lacanian theories can offer the advantages of enriching the analysis of participants' accounts with the observational insights of the context, which can enable the surfacing of contradictions and complexities rooted in the interplay of concepts such as lack, desire and fantasy. Without laying any claims to this study being an ethnography, the author wants to add to the advantages of gaining observational insight into the context. The method of observation gave the author access into the intersubjective existence of the participants and enabled her to examine how they were constrained, enabled or disconnected from their others. In this thesis, this can be seen in the way the data has enabled the researcher to draw connections between the actions of participants with the actions and desires of others. For instance, in the case of Team II, the 'by the book' signification of herself as an Agile Team Lead by TL II, had created a void of leadership that enabled other participants to fill it with their own

significations of self. Such as ST II's signification of himself as a *'Test Manager'*. Such access to intersubjectivity had also helped the author better appreciate the impact participants can have on one another, as is illustrated by the sustaining and shaping influence BA IV's significations had on SD III.

With the proof of such richness in data on intersubjectivity of participants, the author hopes to inspire further use of observation in Lacanian literature in organisation studies, particularly drawing upon Lacan's theory of discourse. This is on account of Lacan's discourse theory enabling the analyses of the nuances of intersubjectivity from the perspective of relationships (Orozco Guzmán *et al.*, 2014, p. 242, Arnaud and Vidaillet, 2017, p. 4). This would help avoid the pitfall of approaching the participants' relationship with the surrounding discourses and the master signifier unilaterally (as has been seen in Kosmala, 2012, Hoedemaekers, 2010, Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010, Ekman, 2013) and lend voice to the silent presence of the other in the participant's significations. Furthermore, it can unpack the fragmented *selves* of the employees that are entangled with their others. The author contends that integrating intersubjectivity with the fragmentation of *selves* based on such an epistemological approach can enable fresh insights into aspects of interpersonal dynamics such as care (Driver, 2021), resistance (McCabe, 2014) and the dichotomy between individualism in teams (Ezzy, 2001).

b. The Other and ethnographer's reflexivity

The second methodological contribution is more aptly described as an invitation for Lacanian researchers to reflect on the philosophical underpinnings in the

ethnographer's relationship with the organisational Other and the implications it has on the nature of researcher reflexivity. In a Lacanian analysis of her experience of interviewing an NHS manager, Harding (2007) had theorised how her university and NHS Trust had shadowed the process and were "invoked" every time they drew upon their own organisations' symbolic resources during the interview (p. 1766). But in this research, the author finds that she is not only subjected to the alterity of her university but also to that of Aegis as a researcher.

The very signifier of a researcher was made available to the author and this research at the behest of Aegis, as an Other. In giving access to the author to its symbolic oeuvre, Aegis had named her by giving her an ID card and an email account with its own domain name. She had strived to speak its language (by integrating it into her symbolic clusters), dressed according to its codes and bided by its time. More crucially, by determining the limits of what the author could and could not do during the ethnographic study, Aegis had shaped the limits of the author's agency as an ethnographer. While all these are quintessential characteristics of an immersive study (Kenny, 2012, p. 1179), from a Lacanian perspective, the author argues, there is a need to focus on the nature of the researcher's relationship with the organisational Other and how it shapes reflexivity for researchers.

Pavon - Cuellar (2014) posits that the analysis of the researcher is subjected to the same Other to whom the participants are subjected. In other words, there is "no Other of the Other"; and it is this subjection to the same organisational Other that gives the researcher a "unique viewpoint of (her) position in the structure" from which the

analysis of the socio-symbolic context and the subjective lives of the participants in it is done (p. 331). On one end, this theoretical perspective recognises the salient presence of Aegis as an Other in the analysis – an aspect that the author claims deserve a philosophically-informed recognition. On the other, the author disagrees with the position that there is “no Other of the Other”, as in the study, the author was subjected, enabled and informed by both the radical alterity of her university and Aegis even if not to an equal degree.

Pavon - Cuellar (2014) statement pertains to the alterity of language and is derived from Lacan’s position of there being no metalanguage that substantiates psychoanalysis (Lacan, 2006, p. 688). However, with the increasing application of psychoanalytic studies of organisations, organisations (Stavrakakis, 2008, Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015) and even at times, certain discursive relationships (Arnaud, 2002, Kenny, 2012) have been positioned as the big Other. In the light of the knowledge generated by this Lacanian study, the author finds the need to reflect on the embodiment of the Other as organisations and social relations in literature and thus examine its theoretical import on research methodology.

By implication, this also necessitates a re-thinking of how Lacanian researchers can be reflexive. Reflexivity in Lacanian research has been defined by (Parker, 2014b) as the awareness of the “standpoint of the researcher in relation to the material by virtue of the political, theoretical and institutional positions from which one views it” (p. 62). In extension of this definition, the author proposes an examination of how in an

ethnography, the salient presence of the organisational Other can be included and classified in this framework of the researcher's positions.

c. Analytical framework for examining subjectivity

Locating the subject through signifiers is fundamental to Lacanian research (Parker, 2014b, p. 55). Lacanian research has been centred around the role of signifiers that both represent the subject and symbolises her lack of being and the subsequent agency in responding in dealing with that lack (Arnaud, 2002, Harding, 2007, Hoedemaekers, 2010, Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010, Driver, 2017a, Driver, 2018). This does not only entail looking at signifiers that represent the subject's understanding of who they are but also an examination of those signifiers that represent what they do and how they position others (Hoedemaekers, 2010, Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010, Sköld, 2010, Ekman, 2013, Kenny, 2012). This thesis makes a methodological contribution to this empirical imperative by presenting an analytical framework for a nuanced analysis of the subject's positioning in the discursive network of relationships, in the wider socio-symbolic network and also the imagined relations and *selves* that comprise their subjective existence.

To this end, the author proposes the application of the analytical framework developed in this thesis through extensive use of subcodes (Saldana, 2013) supplemented by classifications of those subcodes into grammatical categories of nouns/adjectives and verbs. This framework had the advantage of painting a detailed picture of the various signifiers that anchored and represented the subject, thus enabling an identification of the participants' fragmented *selves*. This surfaced the varied and, at

times, divergent subject positions inhabited by the participants and emphasised the struggles and indeterminacies inherent in the passage between those positions. Combined with the sub-code categories of verbs, these fragmented *selves* were thus, informed by an understanding of the participants' want-to-be *self* and the intricacies of how they mobilised their many *selves* towards that desired object.

The author posits that such deconstruction of the participants' accounts of who they are and what they do enables the researcher to disrupt the text enough to unravel the hidden tapestry of the subject's phased alienation in language to the Other and the master signifier and also capture the lack and subsequent struggle inherent in these psychological processes of subjectivity (Pavon - Cuellar, 2014). In addition, the combining of these analytical codes with those of how the participants' positioned and impelled O/others in their signification presents insight into the sociality of their existence that underlies their struggles and, thus, shapes their signifiatory endeavours. This, thus, helps achieve what Saville Young (2014) outlines as the need to capture the intersubjective aspects (p. 279) without focusing exclusively on the apparent meaning of significations and instead examining subjectivity as "arising in the conversations between positions" (p. 288 emphasis removed).

10.4.3 Contribution to practice

This thesis offers crucial insights into the impact of organisational change on the subjectivity of employees. Implementation of methodologies of software development such as Agile has a wide-ranging impact in defining who the employees are and what they do (as has been discussed in detail in Chapter 7). This brings to light that

subjectivity is not only how employees interpret and enact change but also more broadly about how they are impelled to become a different *self* through mobilisation of their knowledge and desires. So, it is not just that employees bring their subjectivity to change but that their subjectivity is re-worked during such change.

From a practitioner's perspective, the sensitivity to this aspect can enable a more nuanced understanding of employee's behaviours and how that can be approached. The very first step to addressing these struggles of subjectivity lies in embracing the lack in this process that can manifest as failures, inconsistencies and inability (Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007). The sensitivity to this lack by employees in the role of a Team Lead can go a long way in facilitating processes like *Agilisation* for members of their teams. Second, addressing this lack and recognising the subjective transformation implicit in these processes of change involves inviting the employees to signify their struggles or their experiences to them.

The author suggests using Agile ceremonies like *Retrospectives*. *Retrospectives* are meetings that are iteratively held every fortnight with the objective to have an open forum discussion with the team members on how the iteration went for and what can be done to improve performance in the next iteration (Ambler and Holitza, 2012). This includes focusing on aspects that include but are not limited to - efficiency, performance morale and team dynamics (Junker *et al.*, 2021, Ambler and Holitza, 2012). In Team II, the *Retrospectives* began with each member stating things that enabled and disabled them during the iteration and the challenges they anticipate in the upcoming iteration.

The Team Lead both facilitated and participated in these discussions. Junker *et al.* (2021, p. 4) describe these meetings as a “structured way to enable team reflexivity”.

The author draws upon the potential of *Retrospectives* to enable an open discussion and reflexivity, with the position of the manager as a facilitator. Hence, she proposes holding *Retrospectives* as one-on-one sessions (instead of team-wide sessions) to first identify the *self/selves* that the team member brings to the changeful context and then impel them to signify what they think may or does support them in this passage, what holds them back and what they find problematic. Dwelling into facets that support the employee can help in identifying interdiscursive spaces – such as the importance of the role played by BA V for SD III’s comprehension of how *Agilisation* can be done – and ensuring that those relationships are sustained and supported. Similarly, articulation of hindrances and problems can be a very useful way of identifying the different fragments of the member’s *self*. For instance, SME I’s being hindered by the absence of the complexity entailed in underwriting in the signification of Agile could have offered the Team Lead the fragment of the member’s *self* that was unable to find semblance in Agile.

The author emphasises the importance of the Team Lead’s positioning the team member as the subject *supposed to know* as opposed to assuming that role herself (Driver, 2008, p. 927). Such articulations from the employees are a useful way of gaining insights into the interrelated aspects of their knowledge and desire. Addressing these concerns without explicitly referring to what is expected from them will enable the Team Lead to assume the role of a facilitator (as prescribed by Agile) by enabling the

employees through a discussion of their experiences. In the context of Agile, this is even more conducive to practice as it impels the practitioners to learn from their mistakes and does not censure errors and inconsistencies (Ambler and Holitza, 2012, p. 33). Such recurring conversations not only create the space for uninhibited articulations of the challenges by employees but also have the effect of normalising the struggles to *Agilise*, which is the first step in coping with it and signifying it to others.

Gaining these insights from the team members can help the Team Lead forge better and stronger relationships within the team. This can be attained by inviting the members to help one another. For instance, if a team member finds it difficult to actively reach out to others (as is expected of them according to the Agile principles), the Team Lead can invite another member who is proficient in this interpersonal skill to help coach the former member. She can also create a forum for discussing issues that members seem to be struggling with. Even in these discussions, it is important for the Team Lead to not foster the fantasy of attaining a resolution to these problems (Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007) but find a way to coping with the challenges that these issues cause.

10.5 Proposed research avenues and limitations

The unwillingness of the contractors from one of the contracting firms to participate in the study is also a limitation to the study. The observational data had surfaced the complexities of their symbolic context that demanded them to embrace Aegis as their organisational Other while being regulated by their own employer. Their positions were also underpinned by the complexities of being experts in software

development and testing and of also serving the needs of Aegis under the threat of its power. The author had deliberately distanced herself from an approach to discourse that focuses on the mechanisms of power and control (as has been explained in section 6.2). However, access to the accounts of these contractors could have enabled the opportunity to bridge the theoretical perspectives of this thesis with the theoretical imports of power and control. The author suggests the examination of emotional autonomy in contracted employees as an avenue for future research such that it appreciates the contextual complexities of such employees and offers insights into how they cope with these challenges and struggle for an emotionally autonomous *self*.

With this summarization of the thesis and a presentation of its contributions and limitations, the author concludes her signification of emotional autonomy in this research.

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APPENDICES

I - Table of Abbreviations

S. No	Abbreviation	Explanation
1	BA	Business Analyst
2	BDC	Business Design Consultant
3	BO	Business Owner
4	CS	Communications Specialist
5	CU	Claims Unit
6	CMS	Critical Management Studies
7	DA	Design Architect
8	ITM	IT Manager
9	MIU	Management Information Unit
10	PM	Project Manager
11	PO	Product Owner
12	PU	Policy Unit
13	SD	Software Developer
14	SDC	Synergy Development Centre
15	SME	Subject Matter Expert
16	ST	Software Tester
17	TA	Transformation Analyst
18	TL	Team Lead

II – Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Name of department: Strategy and Organisation

Title of the study: A study of employees' processes of adjustments and coping during periods of strategic change.

Introduction

Name	Pallavi Mittra
Current role	Doctoral Research Student
Email	pallavi.mittra@strath.ac.uk
Address	Department of Strategy and Organisation, Strathclyde Business School, Level 7, Livingston Tower, 26 Richmond Street, Glasgow – G1 1XH.
Phone	(+44) 7869649180

What is the purpose of this investigation?

This investigation is a part of my research project that seeks to develop the understanding of how employees adjust and cope during periods of strategic change. This centres on the issues of how the change impacts the everyday life in the organisation and the mechanisms of supports that facilitate such transitions. Therefore the aims of this investigation is to explore the way the process of strategic change in an organisation affects the way employees think about their work, or the difference it makes to how they do their work routine and ad hoc, their position within the organisation and the way in which they associate with it. The focus of this investigation is not on the precise strategic plan of the organisation but on the way it is perceived by the employees.

This investigation has the potential to help make strategic change practices more effective by enabling a closer alignment with the employees who through their actions form and enable the change in the organisation.

Do you have to take part?

Your participation in this interview voluntary, you also have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. This shall in no way cause any difference to the way you are treated.

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What will you do in the project?

The investigation involves an interview that involves asking open-ended questions about your work, experiences related to the changes taking place in the organisation. These interviews would not last more than an hour and will be conducted at an agreed interval over the period of six months. The time and location for conducting the interview can be decided in accordance with your convenience.

In the course of the study you'd be invited to take pictures that are symbolic of your work. Such that it represents what it is that you find to be of great personal value, what challenges or frustrates you the most. These photographs will then be further used during the interviews to get a closer understanding of your experiences at work. The photographs do not have to be actual and could be just indicative of your response to the questions asked. You'd be encouraged to not take any photographs of persons. Participation in this photo-elicitation is again voluntary and you can choose to not participate in this.

Why have you been invited to take part?

The research focuses on strategic change in an organisation and hence it was important to invite participation from employees who have a role to play in either the formulation and dissemination or implementation and regulation of the change process. It is for these reasons that your participation in the investigation is requested.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

The investigation has been designed to ensure that your identity as a participant, your job title and the name of your organisation of employment is anonymised in the representation. Also, the researcher is willing to share the transcribed version of the interview to ensure that you are not misquoted.

What happens to the information in the project?

The interviews will be voice recorded and stored electronically in a password protected computer within the premises of the University of Strathclyde. It will not be made available to anyone but the researcher herself. The data is proposed to be stored for the length of the research project, which is for a duration of two years. Permission from you will be sought in the instance of the need to store the data for more than the specified duration of time.

The data would also be used for publications in journals and presentations for academic conferences. No compromises would be made under any circumstance to the anonymisation of the name of the participant, the job title and the organisation.

The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

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What happens next?

If you are happy to participate in the investigation, please indicate a suitable date and time when an interview can be scheduled. As mentioned earlier, the interview would not take more than an hour of your time.

After the interview, the researcher will be happy to email you the transcription if you'd like to ensure an accurate representation of your responses. The researcher shall also inform you in the instance of the results being published.

Researcher's Contact Details:

If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me at pallavi.mittra@strath.ac.uk or at (+44)7869649180.

Chief Investigator Details:

Name	Dr. Peter McInnes
Designation	Lecturer in Management and Change Leadership
Email	peter.mcinnis@strath.ac.uk
Address	Department of Strategy and Organisation, Strathclyde Business School, Level 7, Livingston Tower, 26 Richmond Street, Glasgow – G1 1XH.
Phone	(0)141 553 6064

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde ethics committee. If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:

Secretary to the University Ethics Committee
Research & Knowledge Exchange Services
University of Strathclyde
Graham Hills Building
50 George Street
Glasgow
G1 1QE

Telephone: 0141 548 3707
Email: ethics@strath.ac.uk

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III – Consent Form



Consent Form

Name of department: Strategy and Organisation

Title of the study: A study of employees' processes of adjustments and coping during periods of strategic change.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.
- I understand that I can withdraw my data from the study at any time.
- I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I consent to being a participant in the project
- I consent to being audio and video recorded as part of the project [delete which is not being used]
Yes/ No

In agreeing to participate in this investigation I am aware that I may be entitled to compensation for accidental bodily injury, including death or disease, arising out of the investigation without the need to prove fault. However, such compensation is subject to acceptance of the Conditions of Compensation, a copy of which is available on request.

(PRINT NAME)

Hereby agree to take part in the above project

Signature of Participant:

Date

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