

# Organizational culture in Business Process Management: The challenge of balancing disciplinary and pastoral power

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## **Abstract**

*Business Process Management (BPM) is a management technique which seeks to constantly innovate business processes to improve customer service while reducing costs. While much IS research has looked at the design and implementation of BPM, including its critical success factors, methodology and processes, until recently little IS research has looked at the broader organizational issues associated with BPM. This paper looks at one organizational issue in particular, that of organizational culture in BPM. Based on an action research study of one BPM project, our findings reveal that BPM's current conceptualization of organizational culture is potentially problematic. Using Foucault's concepts of disciplinary and pastoral power, we suggest that BPM faces a challenge in trying to balance disciplinary and pastoral power.*

**Keywords:** Business Process Management, organizational culture, action research, critical research, Foucault

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## **Introduction**

Business Process Management (BPM) focuses on improving the efficiency, consistency and productivity of an organization. It is a management technique which seeks to constantly innovate business processes to improve customer service while reducing costs. In recent years BPM has ranked highly on most lists of important business topics and BPM has a high profile with IT practitioners.

BPM is introduced into organisations alongside software called Business Process Management Systems (BPMS). BPMS enables the capture of business processes by rendering them as process models; these are used to deliver information to staff, to automate tasks where possible, and to turn tasks into work flows which appear on manager's and staff's desktops as 'to do' lists. (McCoy, 2011; van der Aalst et al., 2003; Wang and Wang, 2006; Weske, 2007).

Much IS research has looked at the design and implementation of BPM, including its critical success factors, methodology and processes (Bandara et al., 2005; IDS\_Scheer, 2005; Weske, 2007; zur Muehlen and Ho, 2006). However, little IS research has looked at the broader organizational issues associated with BPM (Buhl et al., 2012). This is rather surprising, given that BPM failure is most often attributed to organizational as opposed to technical reasons (vom Brocke and Sinnl, 2011). Some research suggests that only 22% of BPM projects are successful at an enterprise-wide level, with 41% being partially successful and the remaining 36% experiencing little or no success at all (AIIM International, 2007).

In this paper we consider one organizational issue in particular - that of organisational culture in BPM. There has been little research on the relationship between BPM and organizational culture, and our suspicion is that BPM's current conceptualization of organizational culture is

potentially problematic, thus leading to the failure of BPM projects. Hence the research question that we seek to address in this paper is as follows: is a more dynamic and nuanced view of culture needed in BPM?

BPM advocates claim that an "ideal BPM culture" must be established before the BPM change process starts. The values of this culture are process orientation, customer focus, quality focus, consistency, team spirit, collaborative approach, and change responsiveness (Hammer, 2010; vom Brocke and Sinnl, 2010; vom Brocke and Sinnl, 2011). This view of culture can be described as rationalistic and somewhat deterministic. It assumes that people's values are malleable and these values can be changed to suit BPM values.

We believe that this view of culture largely ignores the considerable body of research on organizational culture that has developed in information systems over the past two decades. A multiplicity of theories, concepts and measures of culture have been suggested (Gallivan and Srite, 2005), with some seeing organizational culture as the taken for granted set of assumptions, norms and values (Robey and Azevedo, 1994), and others seeing it as contested terrain (Avison and Myers, 1997). In recent years a temporal and emergent view of culture seems to have gained sway (Weick, 1979) with IS scholars looking at the impact of culture on IT and vice-versa (Leidner and Kayworth, 2006). Hence in this paper we provide a more dynamic and nuanced view of the relationship between organizational culture and BPM. Our hope is that with a richer conceptualization of culture BPM projects might then have a greater chance of success. However, even if we allow for a richer and dynamic conceptualization of culture and values in BPM, the question still remains as to whether and to what extent organizational culture can be changed to allow for a successful BPM implementation.

We conducted an action research study that attempted to change the organizational culture and values in a BPM project. While

the BPM project initially succeeded within one business unit, it ended up failing at an organisational level. We analyse this failure using the Foucauldian concepts of disciplinary and pastoral power (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). Foucault, a French critical theorist, describes these two organising processes as micro-relations of power (Foucault, 1980). Over time these processes create knowledge, truth and the social constraints that we commonly term as culture. Hence this paper is an example of critical IS research (Myers and Klein, 2011) and provides a critical perspective on the conceptualization of organizational culture in BPM. Although the BPM project itself ended up as a failure, we learnt much about the importance of organizational culture in BPM projects. As researchers we can learn just as much, if not more, from action research projects that fail (Olesen and Myers, 1999).

This paper is organised as follows. In the next section we review the BPM literature related to success and failure of BPM. The following section discusses organizational culture, followed by an explanation of our theoretical framework. This is followed by a description of the research site and research method. After discussing our findings, the final section is the discussion and conclusions.

## **Business Process Management**

The business process management literature, both academic and practitioner, treats the conception, creation, improvement and retirement of processes as an iterative, repetitive process called the BPM Lifecycle. The business process management effort is seen as required across all of the stages of the lifecycle and as evolutionary in nature. The stages of the lifecycle are generally seen as process strategy, design, implementation, execution, control and evaluation (Bandara et al., 2005; IDS\_Scheer, 2005; Weske, 2007; zur Muehlen and Ho, 2006).

In the research literature on BPM, we can discern five broad research streams. These five streams are concerned with critical success factors, methodology, process architecture, process redesign and organisational culture. We will briefly discuss each of these research streams.

The critical success factor stream looks at which factors are needed for organizations to successfully embed the BPM lifecycle. Some of the factors that have been identified are as follows: ensuring the strategic alignment of the process goals with strategic goals; having a process orientation; understanding the existing culture and communicating a clear change vision; high level sponsorship and management support; clarity of process ownership; high quality training and staff participation; good governance including staff and management incentives being clear and achievable; best project management practice with cross functional teams and clear process design principles; and reliable information technology (Bandara et al., 2007; Indulska et al., 2006; Jeston and Nelis, 2006; zur Muehlen and Ho, 2006).

A relatively new research stream on BPM methodology has looked at those practitioner methodologies which are seen as best practice by BPM practitioners (Bandara et al., 2010; Bandara et al., 2007). A multiphase approach is recommended in most BPM methodologies. The first phase is intended to analyse the business model of the organization. It is intended to measure process orientation, gain acceptance for the business process management approach, and set the draft improvement plan. The second phase investigates the organisation in more depth. It drills down on end to end processes, investigates what customers expect of process, identifies process owners, process goals and principles and how processes will be measured. It identifies a priority of processes for mapping, identifies what BPMS will be suitable for the organisation, and achieves agreement on mapping standards. It also identifies

constraints to the process. The third phase is the embedding of the BPM competency into a permanent BPM team in the business unit and delivering the high priority improvements identified earlier. Throughout these phases process orientation is measured and actively increased (Burlton, 2001; Jeston and Nelis, 2006)

The third research stream looks at the process architecture of BPM. Davenport (1993) proposed the concept of a process orientation to business which involves elements of structure, focus, measurement, ownership and customer orientation. Davenport said that businesses with this orientation should look at the structure of processes and how they deliver value, they should focus on how work is done not what work is done, and they should measure the results of the process (Davenport, 1993). Reijers (2006) proposed Davenport's construct of process orientation as a predictor of BPMS success. He suggested a move to process orientation involves a change of mind set emphasising end to end business processes rather than hierarchal and functional structures. This process orientation is achieved through the development of a process architecture for the whole organization. This architecture shows the interrelationships between the key business processes and the support processes and their alignment with the strategies, goals and policies of an organisation (Davis and Brabänder, 2007; Harmon, 2007; Jeston and Nelis, 2006; Rosemann and de Bruin, 2005). The intention of this process architecture is to create a set of standards so that analysis, improvement and automation can take place.

The fourth research stream is concerned with process redesign. BPM relies on the ability to continually redesign and implement improved processes and this means that process redesign principles and guidelines have to be explicit and teachable. Reijers and Liman Mansar (2005) provide a framework for redesign that identifies topics that should be considered, and Harmon

(2007) recommends starting by searching for processes "with problems." This fourth research stream is much less developed than the others, with redesign in BPM often treated as an art (Sharp and McDermott, 2001; Zellner, 2011).

The fifth – and least developed - research stream is concerned with organizational culture. The stated objective of BPM is to embed BPM capability onto an organisation, implement the selected BPM systems and then begin improving processes on an on-going basis. The literature on BPM emphasizes that there is a need to understand and to manage organisational culture during a BPM project (Schmiedel et al., 2013). Any implementation of BPM requires a change in values (to a process orientation) which leads to a change in actions (selection of process methodology and tools) which in turn leads to a change in structure (the implementation of BPM and BPMS). BPM thus requires a "BPM culture" to be formed (Schmiedel et al., 2012; vom Brocke and Sinnl, 2011). However, Baumöl (2010) suggests that most BPM practitioners do not have an appropriate understanding of organizational culture. Little IS research has looked at organizational culture in BPM (Buhl et al., 2012) although as we said earlier, BPM failure is most often attributed to cultural as opposed to technical reasons (vom Brocke and Sinnl, 2011).

Hence this paper can be seen as a contribution to the fifth stream of research on BPM. We believe that BPM needs to have a more dynamic and nuanced view of culture for BPM projects to have a greater chance of success. We draw on Foucault's concepts of pastoral power and disciplinary power in order to provide a richer conceptualization of organizational culture in BPM. We will first of all look at organizational culture as it has been discussed by IS scholars, and then focus specifically on Foucault's concept of culture.

## **Organizational Culture**

A multiplicity of theories, concepts and measures of organizational culture have been suggested as being relevant for IS research (Gallivan and Srite, 2005). However, Schein's (1984) view of organizational culture has been one of the most influential. Schein defines organizational culture in the following way:

Organizational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1984, p.3).

Schein argues that culture is something which identifies and differentiates a social group. Many IS researchers have adopted Schein's perspective, seeing organizational culture as the taken for granted set of assumptions, norms and values (Robey and Azevedo, 1994). If this perspective of organizational culture is adopted, the corollary is that organizational culture is not something that can be changed quickly. In fact, since the collective values, beliefs and principles of the organization have been developed over a long period of time, attempting to change "taken for granted" assumptions, as BPM attempts to do, will be very difficult.

A somewhat different view of organizational culture sees it as being temporal and emergent (Weick, 1979). Some IS scholars have looked at organizational culture this way, looking at the impact of culture on IT and vice-versa (Leidner and Kayworth, 2006) with some seeing it as contested terrain (Avison and Myers, 1997). Yet others have suggested that no single perspective is sufficient to capture the complexity of interplays between organizational culture and information systems. For example,

Kappos and Rivard (2008) adopted a conceptualization that views culture from three perspectives — integration, differentiation, and fragmentation — that come into play simultaneously and jointly.

In this paper we adopt Foucault's concept of culture. Foucault does not treat culture and power as separate, but suggests that culture and power are inextricably intertwined. This view of culture is thus consistent with a conception of organizational culture as temporal, emergent, and contested terrain, while still being very difficult to change.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Critical research expands the IS research agenda to incorporate social issues and provides a framework to understand freedom, power, social control and values (Myers and Klein, 2011). In this paper our theoretical framework is based on the concepts of pastoral power and disciplinary power from Foucault, a French critical theorist.

Most IS researchers using Foucault have tended to focus on Foucault's concept of disciplinary power (Willcocks, 2004; Willcocks, 2006). Disciplinary power relies on hierarchal observation to control people. The essential idea is that this form of power enables a person, organization or institution to decide what is right or wrong and discipline people accordingly. This form of power not only produces reality, but it also produces the individual, the self, and the knowledge about the self that is deemed legitimate (Foucault, 1977).

IS researchers using the concept of disciplinary power have looked at the surveillance capabilities of information systems, seeing them as a disciplinary technology (Silva and Fulk, 2012; Smith et al., 2010; Ye et al., 2012). For example, Doolin (1998; 2004) shows how the development of a new information system in a hospital increased the visibility of the

resources and thus facilitated surveillance by management. Young, Kuo and Myers (2012) look at how the capabilities for surveillance inherent in a Knowledge Management System severely limited knowledge sharing within a Chinese cultural context.

All of these critical IS studies have exposed the existence of power relations which improve understanding of the context within which information systems are implemented. Our approach builds on these previous studies and accepts that IS can be seen as a disciplinary technology. However, in this paper we introduce a new concept to IS research, one that Foucault developed in his later work - that of pastoral power. Pastoral power is a different form of power than disciplinary power, as we will now explain.

Foucault describes pastoral power as the power relations that exist between a leader who acts as a shepherd and his flock, usually in a religious setting (Foucault, 1994; Foucault, 1999). A pastor does not rule a territory in a physical sense, but the multiplicity of individuals in a flock. Unlike disciplinary power, where the good of the whole state or institution is paramount, in pastoral power the good of each individual sheep in the flock is paramount. The pastor's role is to protect those shepherded, and in fact the shepherd might be asked to sacrifice himself for the flock. The corollary of pastoral power, however, is that each individual must seek salvation, the pastor's authority requires personal submission, and the pastor teaches truth and requires the truth to be practised in the members of the flock.

Foucault's thesis is that this form of power is no longer linked solely to religious institutions but has been taken up by the early modern state, government institutions and in society more generally. In some countries today the state is sometimes nicknamed the "nanny State" which reflects this move to pastoral power. Salvation is now health and wealth, with the officials of

the state (doctors, psychiatrists, educationalists) encouraging obedience to the truth (e.g. healthy living). At the heart of these truth activities is the confession, where the subject produces an account of the truth about themselves (e.g. confesses one's dietary habits to the doctor). Confession and knowledge of the self is at the very heart of pastoral power, but the process is not complete until the subject has a true knowledge about himself and obeys accordingly (e.g. knows what the cholesterol target is and changes his/her diet as needed).

Foucault also applies these ideas to the insurance industry (Foucault, 1978). The insurer has the ethical responsibility, as a public duty, to establish risk pools with the right pricing for risk, based on actuarial science. The insured has the responsibility to be an ethical, self-regulating subject who will protect their own property to the fullest extent of rational conduct and manage their own behaviour to minimise risk. Any additional risks (e.g. collecting a speeding fine) should be confessed to the insurer, otherwise an insurance claim can be declined.

Foucault suggests that both forms of power – disciplinary and pastoral - create knowledge, truth and the social constraints that we commonly term as culture (Foucault, 1982). He says that the objective of focusing on power "is to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (Foucault, 1982, p. 777). Thus in our study we discuss both disciplinary and pastoral power in order to explore the role of organizational culture in a BPM project (which happens to be in an insurance company). As we will see, the use of disciplinary power in BPM involves the measuring and monitoring of business processes according to a predetermined standard. Since BPM relies almost exclusively on disciplinary power, we believe that BPM faces a challenge in trying to balance disciplinary and pastoral power.

## **Research Site**

Nationwide Insurance (a pseudonym) is a New Zealand commercial and personal insurance company owned by an Australian based financial services organisation, referred to in this paper as Australian Insurance Limited (AIL), also a pseudonym. Nationwide was formed in 1905 as a government owned trading department offering fire and general insurance to the NZ public. However, following the New Zealand government's program of corporatisation and privatisation of state owned assets in the 1980s, Nationwide was sold off to an overseas buyer. Unfortunately, while premium income grew in the following decade, market share began to slide.

In February 2001 Nationwide was sold to AIL Insurance, one of the largest insurance companies in Australasia. Nationwide was restructured into a national model focusing on three call centre focused units: sales and service for both personal and commercial customers in Auckland, business support and broker in Wellington, and all claims in Christchurch. The restructuring led to 31 sales centres being shut around the country along with previously established call centre sites in other centres. The integration of AIL Insurance NZ with Nationwide occurred that same year. This structure was still in place in 2007 when this research project started.

In 2007 Nationwide was facing a predicament. A cost saving exercise that year had failed to deliver improved profits and the business was forecasting a large loss for the coming financial year. As a result of the issues caused by the implementation of a new insurance system (called Huon), customer satisfaction and retention was at an all-time low and staff satisfaction was also low. The strategic goal of 30% market share with 35% of the profit pool looked unachievable. The CEO of Nationwide was under intense pressure from the Australian Board to immediately improve the business results.

It was within this context that the BPM project was launched. BPM offered a solution to negative customer advocacy, low staff satisfaction and poor profits. The implementation of Huon had not addressed business processes but had simply replaced the previous system. This left the legacy processes struggling to catch up with the new functionality. The Project Director proposed creating a centre of process excellence in the business, initially called Business Process and Systems (BP&S), to deliver a follow up programme to improve business process. This team was setup in October 2007.

Nationwide had three business units: Personal insurance sales and service (Personal), Commercial insurance sales and service (Commercial) and Claims which handled claims for both types of policy. It was agreed that the Commercial business unit would be the centre of a pilot of the proposed business improvement methodology while the two remaining business units would start later.

## **Research Method**

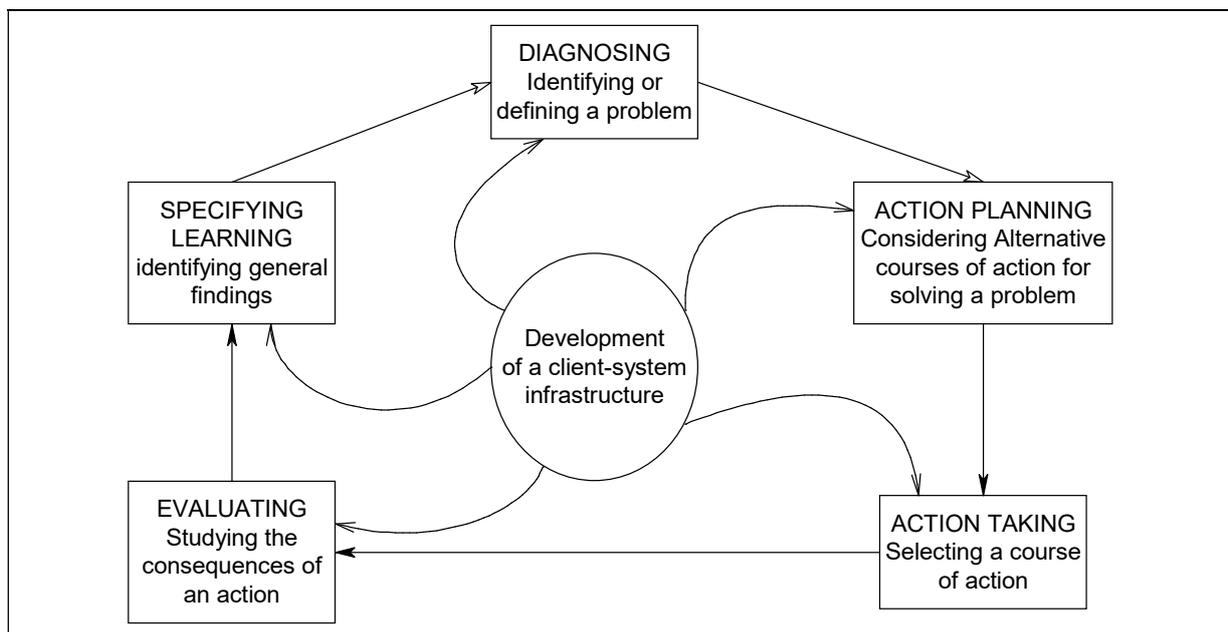
Given the relatively high failure rate of BPM projects, the company agreed to the use of action research (AR) as a way to try to improve the chances of success (Baskerville and Myers, 2004; Davison et al., 2004). An action research charter for the project was established as recommended by Avison, Baskerville & Myers (2001), which incorporated the key points for design and control of the project. One of the authors, with many years' experience using BPM, was the Business Process Improvement Manager on the project and took the role of AR Lead.

For this action research project we used the classical action research cycle described by Susman and Evered (1978). The five stages of the cycle are: diagnosing, action planning, action taking, evaluation, and specifying

learning. The action research cycle is shown in Figure 1 below.

In Susman and Evered's model, the first phase, called Diagnosing, involves the identification of primary problems that are to be addressed within the host organization. The second phase, Action Planning, specifies the organizational actions that should be taken to relieve or address these problems. These planned actions are guided by the theoretical framework of the

action researcher. The third phase, called Action Taking, implements the planned actions. The fourth phase, Evaluation, includes analyzing whether the planned actions achieved their intended effects. The last phase, Specifying Learning, specifies what was learnt during the action research project. This is when the knowledge gained is applied within the organization and communicated to the scientific community (Olesen and Myers, 1999).



**Figure 1 - The Action Research Model**

Note: Adapted from Susman and Evered, 1978.

Hence, the first step in the AR project was to diagnose the problem. The BPM team identified the critical success factors for BPM implementation from the research literature. This literature review resulted in a list of critical success factors and sub-factors which are summarised in Table 1.

The diagnosis of the problem then entailed assessing the presence of these factors in the organization. This study of Nationwide's organizational culture involved observing and recording the physical artefacts of culture in order to decipher the values of the organisation. The observations were

considered alongside the espoused values of the organisation: Honesty, Teamwork, Meritocracy, Transparency, Innovation and Social Responsibility. They were also considered as evidence of the presence or otherwise of the critical success factors. In addition, ten customers were videotaped (with their permission) as they participated in semi structured interviews about their experience with Nationwide Commercial. Workshops and semi-structured interviews with eight staff members were then conducted to help understand whether the critical success factors for BPM project success were present in the organisation.

The interviews were conducted according to the guidelines suggested by Myers and Newman (2007).

Success was defined as embedding the ability within the organisation to improve business processes in order to improve

customer experience and organisational productivity. The resulting list of requirements for the success of the BPM project at Nationwide is included in the right hand column of Table 1.

<b>Table 1 - Critical Success Factors for Nationwide BPM Implementation</b>		
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Sub Factor</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
Strategic Alignment	Organisational Structure	The structure is clear and there is willingness to change structure to support change
	Roles and Responsibilities	Clear roles and responsibilities, change plans and training in place for redefined roles and responsibilities
	Strategic Clarity	Stated strategic objectives are mirrored by existing initiatives and behaviour. Unstated strategic objectives that contradict or re-prioritise stated objectives are not evident.
	Strategic Links to Process	Process goals set in line with stated strategic objectives
	Customer Expectation of Process	Voice of customer mechanisms in place
	Business Partners Expectations of Process	Process design feedback in place
Process	Process Orientation/ Maturity	Measure in place to continually monitor increase in process orientation/maturity. This measure indicates fit of organisational environment with BPM values.
	BPM Expertise	The BPM team has the support of experienced BPM practitioners
Culture	Culture	Current culture is understood as well as possible. Values are articulated and supported by analysis of behaviour and symbols
	Change Vision	Clear well communicated vision and why the organisation is undertaking the change
	Change Readiness	Employees hold positive views about need for change, preparedness for change and the potential for positive outcomes.
	Change Management Expertise	Change planning follows contextual analysis and includes change path, change start point, change style, change interventions, change roles, and change barriers
	Change Reinforcement	Mechanism in place to reward changed behaviour
	Expectations	Expectations of all stakeholders are understood and managed
	Communication	Transparent (Clear, consistent, timely ) to all stakeholders
Leadership	Leadership	High level sponsorship with on-going contact with the project and championship at senior level
	Management Competency	Assessment of manager capability for process and change
	Management Support	Sustained management commitment and leadership from the top of the organisation
	Process Owner Support	Clarity around who owns process and why (particularly processes that cross functional boundaries) with owners having authority and credibility. Leadership support for process owners improvement initiatives
	Championship	Championship at all levels of the organisation

People	Staff Competency	Assessment of staff capability for process and change requirements
	Training/Knowledge Transfer	Clear underlying theory, accessible high quality training with outcome measures
	User Participation	Staff participation in process design and improvement
Governance	Benefits Management Structure	Clear business cases and post implementation reviews
	Resources	Sufficient resources to accomplish the project plan, no competing initiatives
	Performance Management	Staff and managers are incentivised to support process goals which in turn support strategic objectives
	Goals and Measures	Process goals clear and achievable, measures are timely
Method	Initiation and Completion	Clear project and sub project initiation, timeframes and completion
	Project Planning and Management	Iterative planning approach that allows for complexity and emergent change, clear timeframes, realistic objectives, timely reporting and progress measurement and support for all business as usual activities which run in parallel
	BPM Team Composition	Cross functional, well trained, appropriate authority and credibility, role clarity
	Process Architecture	Clearly documented, organisationally appropriate (not IT appropriate) with levels suitable for industry
	Process Redesign	Documented design principles.
	BPM Methodology	Proven, documented, trained, clear, with iterative improvement
	Standardisation	Modelling, redesign and other lifecycle methods are documented and standardises
	Modelling Methodology	Proven, documented, trained, clear, with organisational participation
	Modelling Tool	Business friendly first (not IT friendly first)
	Modelling Language	Business friendly first (not IT friendly first)
Information Technology	IT Infrastructure	Reliable, responsive
	Systems testing	Changes are tested thoroughly by developers and users

The second step in the AR project was action planning (Susman and Evered, 1978). This step involved deciding how the requirements identified in the first step might be addressed in a practical way. During this step the BPM workshops and semi-structured interviews were audio taped, the AR Lead wrote field notes, and emails and documents were collected. The workshops were attended by the Commercial Manager, his three direct reports, the BP&S Manager and the AR Lead. The meetings included the weekly Commercial management team meeting and project related meetings. The primary role of the AR Lead at this point was to prepare the initial versions of process architecture and start the process mapping of selected processes for

improvement. This entailed working physically in the business unit in a role that allowed her to be a participant observer. During this period there was a strong focus on the critical success factors so the themes related to these were the focus for discussion in the meetings.

The third step in the AR project was action taking. A Continuous Process Improvement team for the BPM project was formed. This BPM team attempted to address those factors that were found to be lacking earlier. The team listened to calls and observed staff and customer interactions. The AR Lead continued to keep field notes throughout this phase. She initially spent time listening to and recording approximately 75 end to end phone calls

from approximately 30 seconds to 40 minutes in length.

The fourth step in the AR cycle was specifying learning (Susman and Evered, 1978). The management team believed that the BPM project had gone well within this one business unit and a good understanding of the company had been achieved. Hence it was decided that the BPM project should be rolled out to the Nationwide organisation as a whole. A second action research cycle now began (Susman and Evered, 1978).

Three teams were formed to map the end to end processes of the entire Nationwide organisation. Each team was comprised of an external facilitator who was an expert in the mapping tool selected, an internal expert in the area and a business analyst from the BP&S team. The mapping approach was to conduct a series of workshops with the various areas of the business. Once mapping was complete departmental Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) teams were formed and trained in the BPM methodology. Each of the analysts in these three teams were trained in the basics of data collection and asked to complete daily field notes in an electronic diary.

In addition twelve workshops were audiotaped, feedback documents from twenty workshop participants were collected and a huge range of emails and other documents collected. Once again the organisation agreed to enlist customers and video recordings of twenty semi-structured interviews and customer interactions were made. This time it was observations of customers requesting claims information or discussing their claims experiences in semi-structured interviews. All the data from interviews, observations, workshops etc were then triangulated, as is explained in the next section.

## **Data Analysis**

As is common with most qualitative research projects, the data collection and analysis proceeded in an iterative fashion. The first author documented chronologically the events that occurred during the project. The chronology was kept in an Excel spreadsheet with hyperlinks to field notes, audio files and video files, and documents etc.

During the first action research cycle the first author coded the data herself and analysed them to come up with analytic categories. These categories were then used as triggers for discussion prior to each AR meeting with the BPM team. Gradually themes emerged during this process. During the second action research cycle the first author decided to meet weekly with one analyst from each of the three BP&S teams. Together they coded the data using the themes that had emerged from the earlier work. In an iterative fashion the categories and themes were discussed and revised as needed with the agreement of both the researcher and the analysts in the company.

Subsequently the entire data archive was searched for the underlying relations of power and truth at work. Putting the data into a genealogical framework as per our Foucauldian theoretical framework gave us deep insights into the organizational culture of Nationwide and the BPM project.

## **The BPM Project**

The BPM project at Nationwide ran from September 2007 to December 2009. Figure 2 provides a timeline summarising the two streams of activity at Nationwide during this period.

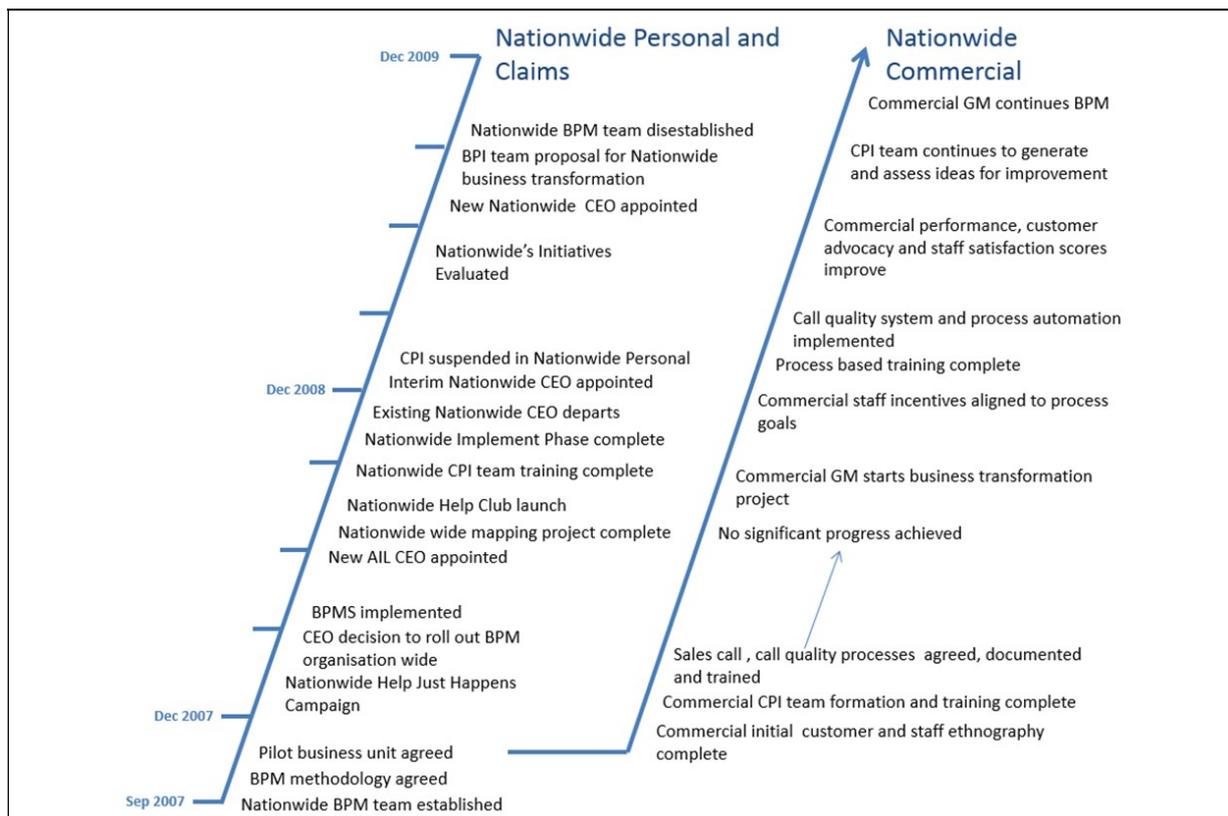
### ***Nationwide Commercial***

The first phase of the BPM project primarily involved the Commercial management team: the General Manager and three of his direct reports, Underwriting Manager, Service

Delivery Manager and Agency Team Leader, in a series of workshops. They were given an initial training session on BPM and the objectives of the Context phase and then participated in the development of the top two levels of the process architecture, the organisational context view and the organisational process view. They then focused on clarifying the business unit's objectives and aligning these with the overall strategic objective. Once objectives had been agreed a process based dashboard was constructed to measure progress.

While this work was proceeding the AR Lead was working from a hot desk in the Commercial Call Centre. The call centre

looked like many others with walls covered in the latest marketing media, staff members wearing headsets logged into a telephone system, a hum of conversations, a call board visible high on each of the walls showing the number of waiting calls, the average wait time and the percentage of calls answered in 30 seconds or less; if this service level percentage went below 85% the call board flashed red. If this happened or the Service Delivery Manager thought the calls were getting backlogged he would ring a bell which meant that anyone on discretionary after call work and off the phones must get back on the phones immediately.



**Figure 2 - Time Line for BPM Implementation at Nationwide**

The first clue this was not really like other call centres was the weekly management meeting. The senior managers and Team Leaders left to go to another building for

what was usually a two hour meeting. As soon as they left the usual hum increased and the number of calls waiting started to climb. The first author noticed one staff

member writing music on what appeared to an application on his desktop, another texting, others emailing and everyone acting as though the call board was not flashing red; they simply ignored it. When the managers returned so did normality. This turned out to be fairly typical behaviour when the managers were absent. The first author's field notes record:

*I was rather confused. I was seeing all the symbols of a call centre but very little behaviour that I had observed in previous call centres where the staff were tightly disciplined with call targets and average call times. Staff took every opportunity they could to get away from the phones for breaks. There was an intense focus on making work fun, a theme day when staff dressed up, and regular staff social events run by the business unit. This behaviour seemed strangely at odds with the low staff satisfaction score.*

A Team Leader who had been in the call centre from its inception in 2001 said:

*You need to understand we're not traditionally a call centre and I think that was drummed into me when we got this thing going...yes we run like a call centre but we're not... it's a tough job so they make it more fun than a call centre.*

A staff member who had recently joined from a large New Zealand bank call centre talked about the differences:

*I couldn't believe it when I got here I was woooo... this is flexible...it felt weird really but I guess I like it but I think they could be a bit more structured..."*

The Discovery phase involved the setting up of the permanent Commercial CPI team, an intensive process mapping project and a customer experience project. The Commercial CPI team identified the full list of processes the business unit engaged in, their process owners, goals and principles and measures.

As the mapping started the BPM team quickly identified that the first business process which new customers engaged with was that of customer needs discovery. Listening to sales revealed an inconsistent approach from staff even though they had been through a training programme. There was no independent call quality audit process, as is common in call centres, to monitor calls because Commercial staff had convinced the General Manager that the Team Leaders should perform this function instead.

However, the customer experience phase of the BPM project discovered long wait times, very inefficient lengthy identification of customer needs, and overall an unprofessional approach. Only half of the calls recorded in the study had quotes sent out and none had made a sale. The BPM team concluded that the negative customer advocacy score was accurate.

At the end of one BPM session the GM commented:

*I think it's vital that all the Team Leaders are well aware of this stuff, all the information we've just talked about...We have to tackle this as a team...The more people who know where we're at and what our starting point is and all the work ahead of us the better... We kind of had a gut feel on what's been happening and where we're at ...We've always said there's room to improve but this is kind of a reality check.*

Despite these findings, the Commercial management team remained very positive about the BPM project.

Six months later, however, it became evident that no real changes had been made within the business, despite the implementation phase apparently going as planned. The Team Leaders agreed to make changes but then did not implement them.

At this point the BPM team agreed on an additional success factors which they

believed were missing from the literature reviewed earlier. These are listed in Table 2.

The Commercial GM agreed to embark on a business transformation phase for BPM. This would utilise the existing CPI methodology and would address the leadership, people and cultural issues that

appeared to be impeding progress. The BPM team redesigned and formalised the management processes that would be needed for ensuring the success of the transformation phase. These processes ensured they monitored and responded to lack of call quality in a structured way.

Table 1 - Additional CSF's For BPM		
Factor	Sub Factor	Requirements
Leadership	Management Competency	Assessment of management capability for process and change
	Management Processes	Management processes for acquiring and deploying processes to deliver business support and business processes, and planning and controlling have been designed to support change
	Team leader Change Leadership	Team Managers are actively leading the change for their staff

As the BPM team worked to ensure compliance with the new CPI initiatives and management processes, however, some of the Team Leaders objected. They saw the new functions in their role as insulting to their staff. Some Team Leaders commented:

*I was on the phones for three years and nobody had to tell me how to do it...now I'm a Team Leader and it's my job to look after them... it's worse than being on the phones again.*

*"Read the values (Nationwide's espoused organisational values: Honesty , Teamwork , Meritocracy, Transparency , Innovation and Social Responsibility). That's what they (the staff) want from us...not this bullshit.*

Part of the transformation approach was to put emphasis on revised performance measures. The Team Leaders showed an on-going mistrust of the numbers being produced and did not see the relevance of these measures.

*...now it's endless arguments about the call quality scores and call times...none of it actually gets the job done.*

They saw the GM as constantly changing the rules which also contributed to their

belief they would not ultimately be held to account for lack of compliance.

*He (GM) wants us to put all this pressure on them (staff) and none of it applies to him. One minute the target is 600 items per week and then he says it's a 1000 and that just stupid...never going to happen.*

In a separate discussion with the GM, he expressed similar feelings about his engagement with his manager, the CEO. In a conversation about how underperformance to budget would be received and how to manage the implementation of new CEO initiative outside the BPM framework he said:

*"You take the whipping like a good soldier you know...the important things is not to argue and to have a good story about how you're fixing it...he'll be on someone else's case next month...anyway it's all a moving target....budget... reforecast... reforecast.... you just have to wait it out..."*

During this phase three of the five Team Leaders left Nationwide Commercial. Acting Team Leaders were appointed from the

staff and trained in the management processes awaiting implementation.

Also during this phase the Commercial GM gave explicit instructions that three staff be placed "into performance management." This involved the Team Leader giving the staff member a verbal warning and some explicit targets to achieve. If they failed they would be given a written warning, new targets and finally dismissed.

Ultimately the process transformation approach was considered very successful with increased customer satisfaction scores, increased staff engagement scores and increased profitability as a result. An excerpt from our field notes in March 2009 state:

*It feels so different down here now (Level 6). It's more like a Call Centre I guess but there's something else as well. It's a restrained professional look and feel and these guys are acting like Commercial insurance agents not kindergarten children when the boss is away. The new teams are really working and I think seeing some automation arrive has helped too. I've just been sitting on Level 7 (Personal Sales) and it's like chalk and cheese now."*

A staff survey in late January 2009 included the following staff comments:

*It's great to come into a company where the leaders and management recognise that change is needed at all levels and not just the frontline... The team and the leader I have is very supportive and open and believe Nationwide is heading the right track.*

*Overall the structure is becoming more structured and the mechanisms are being introduced to monitor specific areas in a much more constructive way giving a picture of what works well and what doesn't, as well as who works well etc.*

*I think the leadership in the commercial team has improved in the recent*

*months. The processes are more transparent, concise and aligned with a common purpose, which gives a sense of direction with achievable goals.*

### **Nationwide Personal and Claims**

The BPM implementation in the rest of Nationwide followed the same path as the Commercial implementation. Initially there was an enthusiastic response to mapping:

*"This will be great to have everything written down. No idea why it hasn't been up until now."*

*"These will be a fantastic resource. It's great the way it links everything together."*

*"It'll be so much easier to train g new staff."*

Most attendees responded positively to the BPM training:

*"It's a sensible plan for the company to take on board."*

*"Methodology is sound and will enable focus on deliverables that will make a difference."*

*"What a full on session – Listen, Measure, Learn, Innovate. Voice of the Customer keeps coming to me every minute of our discussion during this session. Goals and Strategy has never taken so much focus in my entire working life at AIL. Well done to the CPI Team. Moving forward in the right direction. WOW!"*

There were a few reservations, however:

*"Our business does not share a single vision or goal but everyone is acting like it does or it can do."*

The BPM analysts found that the call centres for Personal and Claims (the two other business units of Nationwide) were in a similar state to the call centre at Commercial (i.e. as it was at the beginning of the BPM project):

*This isn't like other call centres I've been in. For instance a lot of staff have personalised 'stuff' around their desks like photos of their friends, family etc...*

*"Looks like taking a call is an interruption for these people. CSA's are allowed to surf whilst waiting for a call and when a call does come through then it's an inconvenience.*

*"S (TL) doesn't seem to mind what his people do while waiting for calls. I asked him why and he said that he does not like to put a mirror up against people's performance, rather when he sees or hear them do good things he likes to encourage them to keep on doing that."*

After the mapping project for Nationwide was completed and a BPM system implemented, the Help Club was launched in August 2008. Nationwide had several months earlier launched a new media campaign with the tagline "Help Just Happens". However an article in an influential business journal concluded, "shame it's just an advertising concept... the sad truth is, 'help' is nowhere near the engine room of Nationwide... I really hope the customer-facing staff eventually get the extra tools, training and support they need"

This reflected the findings of the BPM team. The Help Club was designed to enable employees to share helpful ideas for business improvement and to be rewarded for doing so. The Little Book of Help, prepared by the HR team, was provided to staff in August and introduced the Help Just Happens concept:

*We've had this crazy idea. To make Nationwide the most helpful company in the world. We think it's a winner. If it works our customer will love us for it and give us more of their business too. Soon we'll have lots and lots of new customers and we'll all be better off and be able to treat ourselves to a trip to Hawaii or buy a new surfboard or a magnetic travel chess set.*

Following the article in the media about Nationwide, the business unit manager for Personal sent out an email to his senior managers and team leaders:

*What we are doing currently at Nationwide with the internalising of the brand with the Help club and philosophy, is paramount to ensuring that our service ethic gets to our customers. We need to emphasise with our staff that every contact with our customers needs to emphasise our ability and our desire to help. We need to be the deliverer of high values and high service... WE CAN DO THIS! WE NEED TO DO THIS.*

*Over the coming weeks I am interested in how we as leaders are living and breathing our Help message and the service we deliver through your sales people...*

*We need to ensure that we are maximising every opportunity with our customers. We all should be following up our quotes... we are on the cusp and have in our hands, the opportunity to make Nationwide Great! – let's not let that opportunity go.*

A few months later, however, it became apparent that similar issues as found in Commercial were causing the CPI teams in Personal and Claims to fail to implement change. On a superficial level it seemed that the BPM project had been a success, but the cultural change required was proving to be difficult to achieve.

At this point the existing Nationwide's CEO's resignation was announced and staff were told he would be leaving in December 2008. The manager of Nationwide Personal suspended his CPI teams, while the Claims teams continued to implement some minor changes.

An interim CEO was appointed in April 2009 and confirmed as permanent in July. The following month the BPM team made one last ditch attempt to persuade the new CEO that wide sweeping transformational

changes of the magnitude that had been implemented at Nationwide Commercial were required. The team made a presentation to her showing what had been achieved in Nationwide Commercial.

The following week the new CEO met with the BPM Manager. She told him that she did not think that BPM was working for Nationwide. She said that she intended to leave it in place in Commercial but she did not think the sort of radical change that Commercial had undergone was required in order to generate the performance improvement required by AIL. The BPM team was disestablished in September 2009.

## Discussion

In retrospect we realize that when we started our action research project at Nationwide we did not seriously question the rationalistic and somewhat deterministic conception of organizational culture in BPM. The starting point for our project was based on a critical success factors view of how to implement BPM, which actually turned out to be a success in one business unit. However, when BPM was rejected by the organisation as a whole, we started to question BPM's assumptions regarding organizational culture. We found that a Foucauldian analysis of the power relations in relation to organizational culture helps to explain why this BPM project failed.

### **Pastoral Power**

While to the external world Nationwide appeared to be centralized at a national level, in reality each of the branches operated autonomously. The branch managers were remunerated on salary and commission. There was a rate book provided by underwriting at the head office but this could be varied at the discretion of the branch manager in consideration of other factors. Procedures were not written. Recruitment was at the branch manager's discretion and the branch manager built his own branch family, or flock. Information on

individual productivity was not kept. Branch managers typified the subjectivity required of a leader in a network of pastoral power as opposed to a network of disciplinary power.

When the Nationwide Commercial call centre was formed the organising processes of pastoral power relations that worked so well at a branch level were simply transferred to the call centre. The branches recruited insurance cadets from applicants without university qualifications in the local community, the branch manager made the selection, and he or she ensured the cadet had every opportunity to sit insurance exams in order to progress up the seniority scale. The cadet was thus indebted to the branch manager who acted as shepherd of the cadet's career. One of the call centre staff talked about her branch manager as follows:

*"He was always saying, "We want the best for you...sit the exams...we know you can do better..." We felt like a family..."*

The Team Leaders, likewise, saw themselves as guides, coaches, counsellors.

*"I've got twelve in my team and there's always someone that needs something ....I'm a mother, a counsellor, a trainer..."*

They did not manage their teams using the rational, technical, written rules of disciplinary power. They did not see the value in technical knowledge such as average call times and other individual productivity measures. They relied instead on 'knowing' their team members, 'knowing' how to motivate them, 'knowing' what their personal circumstances were and how that might be affecting them.

The corollary of this pastoral care, however, is that the subjects of this pastoral power were required to continually develop self-knowledge, to continually work on themselves, and to continually act in accordance with their conscience. The pastor has knowledge of this conscience

and an ability to direct it. As Foucault explains:

*"In itself the exercise of power is not violence; nor is it a consent which, implicitly, is renewable. It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions." (Foucault, 1982, p. 789).*

### **The Move to Disciplinary Power**

The first real challenge to Nationwide's organising processes was the restructuring in 2001 which closed branches and created call centres. Call centres employ techniques of disciplinary power. The key disciplining techniques of call centres are those imposed by the physical layout, the presence of the call board, the on-going observation of staff through reporting from the telephone system, normalising productivity through average call times, normalising quality through scripting, setting call or sales targets and monitoring random calls to ensure both productivity and quality. There is a clear hierarchy, commitment to statistical analysis, commitment to consistency, and identification of non-achievement of objectives. Workers bodies are disciplined through the constant mediation of the telephone call monitoring software. Staff are attached to their phone via headsets and their computer via keyboards; they cannot just leave their desk, they have to log out of the system and enter a code to explain their absence. Call boards flash red when service levels drop and workers are expected to react with urgency.

In this network of disciplinary power the Team Leader subjectivity produced and consumed is that of the gaoler, the foremen, and the enforcer. The Team Leader

constantly monitors statistics and call quality, exhorts all to improve performance and punishes disobedience. The staff subjectivity produced and consumed is obedience, compliance with rules, and docility.

When AIL introduced call centres to Nationwide they created very traditional call centre layouts with a call centre phone system. Staff who had previously worked in branches were transferred to the new call centres. In many cases Team Leaders were senior branch staff and more senior organisational staff were a mixture of Branch and Regional Managers. In the case of the Nationwide Commercial call centre, for instance, the GM was previously a Regional Manager, his Underwriting Manager was also a Regional Manager, and his Team Leaders were a mixture of Branch Managers from small branches and senior staff from the previous Regional hierarchy.

### **Resisting Discipline**

Although the closing of many branches and the establishment of the call centres represented a shift from pastoral power to disciplinary power, in Nationwide Commercial there was a clear intention to subvert the disciplinary pressure right from the outset. While each of the new Call Centres had a new Service Delivery Manager (SDM) role, responsible for rostering and analysis, that role was filled initially by existing Nationwide staff with training on the telephone software and statistical analysis of the call centre.

However, the statistical reports were largely unused. There was a strong emphasis on service delivery which meant that 90% of calls were supposed to be answered in less than 30 seconds, but this did not extend to monitoring call times or the large percentage of 'after call work' that agents did.

AIL failed to embed call centre discipline at Nationwide because managers from the General Manager down to the Team Leaders refused to subject their staff in the

way that call centre discipline required. They enacted this refusal by ignoring the statistical analyses that were available, by not challenging individuals about their productivity or quality, and by continuing to act as leaders in a network of pastoral power rather than disciplinary power. Call centre discipline requires staff to be tightly controlled, but the Team Leaders at Nationwide resisted the use of these disciplinary techniques. The Team Leaders wanted to retain their own subjectivity as managers of people who 'know' what to do, but not be gaolers of their own staff.

### **BPM and Disciplinary Power**

Without us realizing it at the time, the BPM project in effect represented a second attempt (after the restructuring) to replace pastoral power with disciplinary power. One participant at a process mapping workshop commented: *"This will be great to have everything written down... no idea why it hasn't been up until now"*. In retrospect, however, we realize that imposing such techniques simply shifts the balance from pastoral towards disciplinary power.

When the Commercial GM agreed to the BPM project a large number of disciplinary techniques were wielded at once. Some of the essential elements of disciplinary power are hierarchal observation, normalisation, and examination.

*"A power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that "the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up."* (Foucault, 1982, p. 789)

At Nationwide Commercial the senior managers now started to use disciplinary power. The focus on Management Processes was supposed to change the

actions of the Team Leaders. However, the Team Leaders responded with varying degrees of resistance. Ultimately three of the five Team leaders left for other positions in the organisation. Foucault explains:

*"There are no relations of power without resistances... formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised..."* (Foucault, 1980, p. 142).

The Nationwide Commercial CPI team had high initial enthusiasm for BPM, but this did not translate into action. They said they liked the written processes of BPM, but when it came down to it they had no intention of mandating them; they genuinely believed that telling staff the outcome required (as per their previous use of pastoral power) would produce individualised excellent processes. They wanted their staff to succeed but not by measuring and monitoring them; they felt this form of knowledge would not add to what they already 'know' about their staff. They wanted their staff to have a mechanism for improvement suggestions but not to have those suggestions critically evaluated alongside their own against strategic objectives; they believed that the initiatives requested by senior managers should be exempt from this. In a well-developed network of pastoral power the conscience and consequent guilt of the followers should ensure compliance; self-knowledge and the ability to direct it toward action should change behaviour.

### **Rejecting BPM**

In order for the new disciplinary techniques to be maintained the subjectivity of everyone in the network of power relations had to shift. Disciplinary power produces and consumes a different form of subjectivity. New staff members were appointed and trained in the new management processes. The Commercial GM was coached in a more disciplinary management style and he consistently supported the new management processes. With new Team Leaders, new training, and

new incentives, the organising processes now involved the introduction of automation tools and call quality monitoring.

For the BPI team implementing BPM this shift to a rational form of managing based on performance measurement and on-going improvement represented a positive development. For many others, however, this shift from pastoral power to disciplinary power was seen as negative, restrictive, even demeaning.

The new disciplinary techniques mandated by BPM did not last long. The newly appointed Nationwide CEO began to make clear that the form of organising process she wanted at Nationwide was based on pastoral not disciplinary power. She embraced the concept that people had only to be told what the outcomes needed to be; freed from the shackles of their lack of self-knowledge, they would be part of a quantum shift in organisational performance. Hence she rejected BPM as a tool to enable improved performance, and instead the organizational culture that relied on pastoral power prevailed.

## **Conclusion**

Business Process Management is usually ranked as one of the top ten issues for businesses, but the failure rate for BPM projects is relatively high. Given that BPM failure is most often attributed to organizational as opposed to technical reasons, in this paper we have focused on one organizational issue in particular - that of organisational culture.

We conducted an in-depth action research study that attempted to change organizational culture and values as part of a BPM project. This was in line with current BPM thinking that suggests that organisational culture and values must be changed to match BPM culture and values to ensure implementation success (vom Brocke and Sinnl, 2011). However, we discovered that BPM's attempt to change

organizational culture to one that relies almost exclusively on disciplinary power is difficult. We suggest that BPMs conceptualization of organizational culture is potentially problematic.

Foucault says that there are two types of power, disciplinary power and pastoral power (Foucault, 1978, p. 139) in contemporary organizations. Whereas disciplinary power relies on hierarchal observation to control people, pastoral power relies on the free personal submission of a follower to a leader. He suggests that both forms of power – disciplinary and pastoral - create knowledge, truth and the social constraints that we commonly term as culture.

Although Foucault says that both forms of power work together, in Nationwide we discovered that the organizational culture was based mostly on pastoral power, not disciplinary power. Although ostensibly BPM is focused on improving customer service, efficiency, consistency and productivity, to achieve this it relies on the knowledge produced by disciplinary power. BPM assumes that people will produce the outcomes needed if the processes they work within are designed correctly and they adhere to them. It also embraces the concept that those people can, and should, improve those processes through a disciplined approach. Hence the BPM project represented an attempt to change Nationwide's culture from one based mostly on pastoral power to disciplinary power.

Underlying what BPM calls culture are organising processes that create norms and values. BPM values are customer focus, teamwork, personal accountability, willingness to change, process orientation, quality, continuous improvement, consistency, and collaboration (Hammer, 2010; Harmon, 2007; vom Brocke and Sinnl, 2011). But espoused values and even observed behaviour can mask deeper realities. In the initial phases of introducing BPM to Nationwide Commercial the Team Leaders exhibited behaviour that appeared

congruent with BPM values. It was only later that resistance to BPM arose. This resistance manifested itself as inaction – the Team Leaders simply had no intention of implementing the disciplinary processes that BPM requires. We have suggested that this resistance occurred because BPM challenged the existing organizational culture of Nationwide, which was more oriented towards pastoral power, not disciplinary power. Of course, the culture of Nationwide did change throughout the project, as we realise that organizational culture is never static, however it did not change sufficiently to allow the BPM project to succeed.

The theoretical contribution of this paper is therefore to provide a more dynamic and nuanced view of organizational culture, one that takes into account both disciplinary and pastoral power. A practical contribution is to suggest that a more dynamic and nuanced view of organizational culture is needed for BPM projects to have a greater chance of success. A more detailed analysis of the current forms of power within an organization might be useful, especially during the Context phase of the BPM implementation methodology. Along with this it might be wise to consider how it might be possible to balance disciplinary and pastoral power. On the other hand, implementing BPM may not be in the best interests of some organizations no matter how much BPM practitioners believe in its ability to transform performance. The relations of power within an organization may be as entrenched as they were at Nationwide and hence prevent any kind of attempted 'cultural transformation'. Hence IS researchers and practitioners may just need to accept that some IS techniques simply will not work in some organisational contexts.

We acknowledge various limitations of this research project. First, this research was based on one action research project in one particular industry, hence the conclusions may not be generalizable to other organizations or industries. Second, like all

action research projects (Baskerville and Myers, 2004; Rapoport, 1970), attempting to combine research and practice is difficult. By definition the first author was actively involved in the project and this may have biased the results. However, given that she wanted the BPM project to succeed, we believe the lessons we learnt about organizational culture and BPM may well be applicable to many other organizations.

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