



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**WHY WE SERVE:  
PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION AND WHAT THE  
USCIS MISSION MEANS TO ITS WORKFORCE**

by

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March 2021

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC, 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> March 2021	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> WHY WE SERVE: PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION AND WHAT THE USCIS MISSION MEANS TO ITS WORKFORCE			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Katie Witt				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b> A	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>  Why do people choose to serve with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)? How has USCIS articulated its mission and organizational values since its creation? What mission values do employees believe in versus what USCIS asks of them? This thesis uses public service motivation (PSM) theory and value congruence theory to interpret the alignment of USCIS employee value perceptions with organizational values from 2015 to 2020. An examination of the USCIS mission from 2003 to 2020 equips the reader with a comprehensive picture of its evolution. A qualitative analysis of USCIS employee motivational survey responses captured from 2015 to 2020 provides visibility into employee perceptions of "why we serve." The PSM themes found within employee responses—compassionate humanitarian, public interest servant, upholder and influencer of policy, self-sacrificing public servant—provide insight into employee role perceptions. Research findings found a strong fit between organization and employee before 2018. After a substantial change in USCIS mission values in 2018, the fit between the compassionate humanitarian and the organization wanes. However, other PSM values emerge in employee PSM values, suggesting that the organizational storyline may influence individual perception over time. A call for further research is encouraged for sense-making exercises with the Cynefin framework, post-2020 employee PSM perceptions, and employee retention and organizational fit.				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> homeland security, public service motivation, mission statement, organizational storytelling, individual perspective, Cynefin framework, USCIS, RAIO, value congruence, policy change			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 107	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	

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**WHY WE SERVE: PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION AND WHAT THE USCIS  
MISSION MEANS TO ITS WORKFORCE**

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**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(HOMELAND SECURITY AND DEFENSE)**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

Why do people choose to serve with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)? How has USCIS articulated its mission and organizational values since its creation? What mission values do employees believe in versus what USCIS asks of them? This thesis uses public service motivation (PSM) theory and value congruence theory to interpret the alignment of USCIS employee value perceptions with organizational values from 2015 to 2020. An examination of the USCIS mission from 2003 to 2020 equips the reader with a comprehensive picture of its evolution. A qualitative analysis of USCIS employee motivational survey responses captured from 2015 to 2020 provides visibility into employee perceptions of “why we serve.” The PSM themes found within employee responses—compassionate humanitarian, public interest servant, upholder and influencer of policy, self-sacrificing public servant—provide insight into employee role perceptions. Research findings found a strong fit between organization and employee before 2018. After a substantial change in USCIS mission values in 2018, the fit between the compassionate humanitarian and the organization wanes. However, other PSM values emerge in employee PSM values, suggesting that the organizational storyline may influence individual perception over time. A call for further research is encouraged for sense-making exercises with the Cynefin framework, post-2020 employee PSM perceptions, and employee retention and organizational fit.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CBP	Customs and Border Protection
CISA	Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency
DOJ	Department of Justice
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
FEVS	Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey
FOD	Field Office Directorate
GAO	Government Accountability Office
ICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Services
IO	International Operations
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PSM	Public Service Motivation
RAD	Refugee Affairs Division
RAIO	Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations
SWB	Southwest Border
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) agency, particularly the Refugee, Asylum and International Operations (RAIO) directorate, is currently experiencing a high attrition level, even after years of surveys and initiatives to address retention issues. So why is it still an issue? The motivation behind the research contained within this thesis is two-fold: 1) I want to help facilitate change after observing this phenomenon for the past 4 years as a RAIO employee; and 2) USCIS mission values have been highly politicized in recent years, particularly the refugee and asylum space where I call home. Thus, the driving force behind this thesis is to analyze how a change in organization value dynamics affects employee public service motivation levels. Findings from this thesis research may inform the organization on how change affects long-term employee retention rates.

This thesis uses public service motivation (PSM) theory and value congruence theory to interpret the alignment of USCIS employee value perceptions with organizational values from 2015 to 2020. The objective of this thesis was to examine the congruity between the organization's presentation of its mission and employees' perceptions of their public service roles. An examination of the USCIS mission from 2003 to 2020 equips the reader with a comprehensive picture of its evolution. A qualitative analysis of USCIS employee motivational survey responses captured from 2015 to 2020 provides visibility into employee perceptions of why we serve. An exploratory study of fit level between organizational mission and employees' role perceptions revealed variations in strong, neutral and no fit congruence between organization value and employee perception.

I organized my research on documenting the evolution of the agency's mission by asking the following questions: How is the USCIS mission presented in its mission statement and how does the presentation change over time? Why do employees serve with USCIS? What is 'fit' between employees' perceptions of their role and motivations for serving and the mission of the organization? I drew upon the following theoretical frameworks to guide my exploratory qualitative study: Perry's public service motivation (PSM) theory, existing organization value fit research, and Snowden's Cynefin framework.

The story of USCIS as depicted through its mission statements reflects both the goals of the agency as well as the chronological social, political and historical context. An analysis of the evolution of the USCIS mission statement from its creation in 2003–2020 revealed that the agency goals of USCIS have evolved significantly since its assembly in 2003, often times in response to a particular political focus of DHS. Mapping this evolution of purpose using the *Wayback Machine* internet archive tool revealed a few mission value trends leading up to the most recent change in 2018. The mission statements were split into two chronologically based groups for analysis: 2003–September 2009 and July 2018–2020.

Analysis revealed a constant thread of national security and public safety in various degrees over the years, followed by a commitment to uphold lawful immigration policy. This enforcement centric language was most prevalent in 2003 and 2018. The mission in 2008 through 2009 focused more on workforce development and framing the agency as part of the larger immigrant-based American identity. At the time of this thesis publication, the USCIS mission had not changed since 2018. Two word clouds were created to capture popular vocabulary used in the two groupings of mission statements. The word clouds revealed popular vocabulary used for framing the mission during each mission statement grouping. The vocabulary analyzed suggests an evolution from describing what USCIS does to how and for whom the agency provides its services.

I then studied USCIS employees' perceptions of their professional role, focusing on their motivations for serving and the intrinsic rewards derived from their work as interpreted by me based on their responses to internal questionnaires from 2015–2020. The structured approach to the research used Perry's four categorizations of public service motivation (PSM) theory statements as a basis for coding responses accordingly from a variety of available data sets, noting frequency of each category presence and associated reference to intrinsic rewards.

This analysis revealed four groupings of employee professional identity: compassionate humanitarian, public interest servant, upholder and influencer of policy, and self-sacrificing public servant. Of the four groups, the most predominant ones were compassionate humanitarian and public interest servant. I also explored the fit between the organization's presentation of its mission and employees' perceptions of their role in

upholding the agency mission. Employees' perceptions of their role also changed over time like the mission identity of the USCIS organization. The 'who we are' of individual roles remained centered around humanitarian work. However, the "how do we serve and with what outcome?" did evolve. The findings align with existing research that a change in policy may lead to a decline in public service motivation levels along with a misalignment between organizational values and employees' perception of their role in the organization's story. The importance of these findings may inform human capital strategic planning by USCIS, and specifically the RAIO directorate. Further research into the relational fit between what employees believe their mission is versus what the agency claims their mission goals is my recommended next step. Results of further research would be quite useful in informing how to align employee motivation with agency motivation and could aid in improving retention rates.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I thank friends and family for getting me through this beast of a writing project. Thank you, enthusiastic coworkers and caring supervisors, who carried my work burdens while I was writing or attending class. Thank you, relentless advisors, for not letting me off the hook, and asking me to be more than “acceptable.” Thank you, the early riser writing crew, for pushing me through the finish line. And thank you, Dad, wherever you are, for your whisper of a prayer for this great pretender.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Since its formation in 2003, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has struggled with low employee satisfaction and morale levels compared to other government departments.<sup>1</sup> Within the DHS, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) agency, particularly the Refugee, Asylum and International Operations (RAIO) directorate, has experienced high attrition levels in recent years. Leadership has recognized the issue and implemented many surveys and initiatives to attempt to address it. RAIO in particular instituted RAIO Ignite and Thrive in 2019 to increase employee engagement. However, government reports repeatedly reveal that the problem persists.<sup>2</sup> Further, recent news articles express that the problem is more extensive in RAIO, citing frequent policy changes as a way of exacerbating already low morale levels.<sup>3</sup> This suggests unique characteristics of RAIO may contribute to the problem; that is, are RAIO employee motivations contradictory to its agency's mission?

Considerable research in public service motivation shows that individuals are likely motivated by public service because they desire to do good for the public.<sup>4</sup> What individuals define as “doing good,” however, is a reflection of their values. Recent studies exploring congruence between individual and agency values and public service motivation suggest that a misalignment between organizational and individual values can contribute

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Currie, *Department of Homeland Security: Employee Morale Survey Scores Highlight Progress and Continued Challenges*, GAO-20-349T (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2020), <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-20-349T>.

<sup>2</sup> Government Accountability Office, “High Risk: Strategic Human Capital Management,” 2019, [https://www.gao.gov/highrisk/strategic\\_human\\_management/why\\_did\\_study](https://www.gao.gov/highrisk/strategic_human_management/why_did_study).

<sup>3</sup> Eric Katz, “Trump’s Immigration Shakeups Continue to Cause Headaches for Homeland Security Workforce,” *Government Executive*, July 18, 2019, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2019/07/trumps-immigration-shakeups-continue-cause-headaches-dhs-workforce/158536/>.

<sup>4</sup> James L. Perry and Lois Recascino Wise, “The Motivational Bases of Public Service,” *Public Administration Review* 50, no. 3 (1990): 367–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/976618>; James L. Perry, Annie Hondeghem, and Lois Recascino Wise, “Revisiting the Motivational Bases of Public Service: Twenty Years of Research and an Agenda for the Future,” *Public Administration Review* 70, no. 5 (2010): 681–90, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2010.02196.x>; James L. Perry and Annie Hondeghem, eds., *Motivation in Public Management: The Call of Public Service* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), ProQuest; Pablo Alonso and Gregory B. Lewis, “Public Service Motivation and Job Performance: Evidence from the Federal Sector,” *The American Review of Public Administration* 31, no. 4 (December 1, 2001): 363–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02750740122064992>.

to low morale and dissatisfaction.<sup>5</sup> Further, policy changes may contribute to misalignment. This indicates that the increasing politicization of immigration and the USCIS mission may influence the alignment of employees' values with that of the agency values, including the intrinsic rewards they receive from serving. A better understanding of the USCIS mission's dynamics, USCIS employees' perceptions of their role, and the rewards they receive from serving may help address the attrition problem.

My research objective contained in this thesis began with examining the presentation of the USCIS mission and values. Next, I analyzed USCIS employees' perceptions of their role in upholding USCIS values. The final step of the research was to observe and interpret the alignment of those values over time. This study's findings set the stage for further research on the defining relationship of value alignment between organizational mission and individual perception.

To achieve this objective, I analyzed USCIS's presentation of its mission over time (2003-2020) using the *Wayback Machine* internet archive to access prior mission statements on the official USCIS website. I then explored USCIS employees' perceptions of their professional role, focusing on their motivations for serving and the intrinsic rewards derived from their work from 2015–2020. Finally, I explored the congruency between the organization's presentation of its mission and employees' perceptions of the mission using the Cynefin framework to produce an organizational situation awareness assessment.

I organized my research documenting the agency's mission by asking the following questions: How does USCIS express its organizational values in the mission statement? How does the presentation change over time? Why do employees serve with USCIS? What

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<sup>5</sup> Leonard Bright, "Public Employees with High Levels of Public Service Motivation: Who Are They, Where Are They, and What Do They Want?," *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 25, no. 2 (2005): 138–54, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X04272360>; Ulrich Thy Jensen, Lotte Bøgh Andersen, and Christian Bøtcher Jacobsen, "Only When We Agree! How Value Congruence Moderates the Impact of Goal-Oriented Leadership on Public Service Motivation," *Public Administration Review* 79, no. 1 (2019): 12–24, <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13008>; Ulrich Thy Jensen, Anne Mette Kjeldsen, and Christian Fischer Vestergaard, "How Is Public Service Motivation Affected by Regulatory Policy Changes?," *International Public Management Journal* 23, no. 4 (July 3, 2020): 465–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2019.1642268>.



are the relationship between employees' motivations for serving and the mission of the organization? I drew upon two theoretical frameworks to guide my exploratory qualitative study: Perry's public service motivation (PSM) theory and Snowden's Cynefin framework. This thesis focuses on public service members of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) agency, particularly in the Refugee, Asylum and International Operations (RAIO) directorate. RAIO totals in almost 2000 employees, a small yet mighty directorate within USCIS. RAIO has experienced significant organizational and policy changes in recent years.

My analysis of the USCIS mission statement evolution showed a pendulum swing of extreme national security rhetoric to customer service-centric language and back to combatting fraud and national security concerns. This fits the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) 2003 rhetoric following the attacks of 9/11 that led to its creation. However, the degree to which organizational values changed in less than 20 years could be influential to a career employee. The substantial changes in the agency's mission coupled with unexpected world events, continued changes in senior leadership, and various policy changes could augment wavering employee motivations to remain with the agency.

My exploratory research results indicate that USCIS employees have served over the past five years due to public service motivation factors. Precisely, employees follow the belief in acting for the public interest and demonstrate compassionate humanitarian characteristics. Results also show that different public service motivation factors emergence after a mission statement change in 2018. There was a strong fit between organizational value and employees' perception of value for the two PSM factors mentioned above. However, the congruence changed in 2018 to a neutral fit between the same PSM factors. The additional PSM factors, the upholder and influencer of policy and the self-sacrificer, align with 2018 USCIS organizational values. Thus, this study advances understanding of employee public service motivation factors and value congruence between an organization and its workforce, suggesting possible remedies to increase retention at USCIS.

## **A. BACKGROUND**

This section provides a history of the creation of USCIS. This section also summarizes recent political and social events that influenced both the USCIS mission and the analyzed employee responses. I also briefly cover the first-ever USCIS furlough issuance that occurred during the writing of this thesis.

### **1. USCIS Creation**

Before the creation of DHS and USCIS, the Department of Justice (DOJ) handled the business of immigration from 1940–2003.<sup>6</sup> Due to the increased concern of international terrorist threats in the wake of 9/11, immigration duties and border protection split into three entities: ICE and CBP were to cover U.S. borders and illegal immigration, and USCIS to vet legal immigration claims, including asylum and refugee processing. DOJ remains an integral part of the immigration process. Still, the actual application and screening of those seeking immigration benefits of any sort pass through USCIS unless additional legal action is required. As the primary government agency to handle immigration benefits, USCIS's mission and workload are highly dependent upon the political environment and global conditions in which it strives to carry out the said mission. As one of the few fee-funded government agencies, USCIS is financially dependent on fees collected from immigrants who pursue the 'American Dream.'

In summation, USCIS is a relatively new agency for the United States, but its roots in federal government date back to the turn of the 20th century. Formal regulations regarding immigration and national security began to form during World War I. However, the 9/11 attacks that birthed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) into being is what catapulted USCIS into the agency that it is today. As discussed earlier, political agendas influence the agency mission, including administration changes and surprise events that have rattled the global landscape. Over the past few years, significant policy changes coupled with the final pivot of a mission statement adjustment in 2018 may have dramatically altered what USCIS initially set out to do in 2003. As outlined in the analysis

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<sup>6</sup> "Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)," Legal Information Institute, accessed January 3, 2021, [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/immigration\\_and\\_naturalization\\_service\\_\(ins\)](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/immigration_and_naturalization_service_(ins)).

chapter, a chronology of policy changes provides a backdrop to the ever-changing mission, and policies employees were operating under during increased attrition.

## **2. Policy and Major Events Context**

Policy changes within USCIS, particularly with RAIO, responded to how to address the drastic increase in asylum applications. By 2014, the number of fear claims at the Southwest Border (SWB) was overwhelming the three prongs of immigration-related sectors in DHS: Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and USCIS. It had become, as the Obama administration stressed in its request for additional funding in 2014, an “urgent humanitarian situation,” and one that has persisted.<sup>7</sup> In 2019, the circumstances deteriorated further:

Apprehensions and asylum inadmissibility determinations at the southwest border substantially outpaced prior years. In March and April 2019 alone, the Border Patrol apprehended nearly 100,000 persons each month; and in May, apprehensions and inadmissibility determinations reached 144,000; the highest level in seven years. Of those, a majority each month were UACs or family units, primarily asylum seekers from Central America.<sup>8</sup>

The Trump Administration responded to this crisis in a rapid series of policy changes affecting asylum and refugee processing, many of which received an injunction by a local court since their issuance. The contextual timeline serves as a comprehensive summary of the political and social environment under which employees responded.

## **3. Pending Furlough**

The year 2020, when I composed this thesis, was intensely stressful, particularly for the United States. COVID-19 or Coronavirus cases ran rampant, causing a global

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<sup>7</sup> Office of the Press Secretary, “FACT SHEET: Emergency Supplemental Request to Address the Increase in Child and Adult Migration from Central America in the Rio Grande Valley Areas of the Southwest Border,” White House Statements & Releases, July 8, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/07/08/fact-sheet-emergency-supplemental-request-address-increase-child-and-adu>.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Bersin and Nate Bruggenman, *New Reality of Migrant Flows at the U.S. Southwest Border*, Homeland Security Policy Paper #1 (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2019), 2–3, <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=826773>.

pandemic, claiming the lives of over 350,000 Americans by 2021.<sup>9</sup> A series of travel bans and decreased immigration benefit processing due to the pandemic resulted in a significant drop in paid applications to USCIS for various immigration benefits. Since USCIS is one of the few fee-funded agencies, it had not experienced furloughs during previous government shutdowns. However, a lethal pandemic halted people's movement on a global scale for much of 2020. Thus, for the first time since USCIS began in 2003, it faced furloughing up to 75% of its workforce in June 2020. Due to the various other tragic events happening throughout the country (the pandemic, the upcoming presidential election, exploding wildfires on the West coast, to name a few), the pending furlough received little notice by the press.

As a RAIO employee, I received two furlough letters over the summer, once announced in June and again in July, until cancellation in late August 2020. Throughout the summer, RAIO leadership hosted many town halls for employees to receive updates on the furlough status and ask questions that ranged from "will I be fired?" to calls for 100% financial transparency of USCIS. Employees voiced their concerns on paying their rent or mortgage, would they still have access to health care, and could the agency blame the furlough on COVID-19. Senior leadership began hosting daily coffee chats to provide emotional support and sharing healthy telework habits. The workforce divided themselves into two general schools of thought: a) I will demonstrate loyalty to the agency and the mission by weathering this storm and b) I do not deserve this, and any leadership concern is a complete façade. I was stuck somewhere in the middle, trying to write a thesis proposal on why employees such as myself serve under the USCIS, while also worried about how I would pay my mortgage and if it was worth it financially to weather that storm. Rumor of the furlough began to circulate in early May 2020. RAIO collected the most extensive data set of employee responses used for this thesis in June 2020 after the official furlough announcement. Thus, the furlough's timing could have affected response rates and employees' perceptions when they completed the survey.

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<sup>9</sup> "Coronavirus Resource Center," Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, accessed December 19, 2020, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>.

## **B. CONCLUSION**

This introduction provided background information on the history of the creation of USCIS. It also summarized recent political and social events that occurred during the timeframe of this thesis. It also outlined the first-ever USCIS furlough issuance that happened during the writing of this thesis. Next is the literature review chapter, where I summarize the existing research and theoretical framework that I used to conduct my interpretive study.

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## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter defines the theoretical framework I use for my exploratory study: public service motivation (PSM) theory and the Cynefin framework. First, I will review the origins of PSM theory and its use to measure PSM in people. Next, I discuss the relationship between PSM theory and value congruence, which lends to my research's importance. Finally, I explain the Cynefin framework and its helpfulness in providing situational awareness for my research implications.

### **A. PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION THEORY**

The idea of public service is not new, and Mosher in *Democracy and Public Service* captured a comprehensive background on public service and its journey to the 20th century. However, at the end of service motivation (PSM) becomes of interest to behavioral scientists. This section provides an in-depth look at how social science defines and measures PSM.

#### **1. Development of PSM Theory**

In this context, Perry and Wise began their quest to identify and measure public service motivation in the 1990s. This behavior social science sector has since expanded on a global scale. Over thirty years later, the question remains: "Do specific motives exist that are associated with public service primarily or exclusively, and, if there are, what are they?"<sup>10</sup> Perry and Wise's initial review of public service motivation, entitled *The Motivational Bases of Public Service*, analyzed existing theory, summarizing public service motivation as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations."<sup>11</sup>

Although Perry and Wise were not the first set of researchers to study and define public service motivation theory, they are accredited for designing the measurement of

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<sup>10</sup> Perry and Wise, "The Motivational Bases of Public Service," 368.

<sup>11</sup> Perry and Wise, 368.

public service motivation levels.<sup>12</sup> Perry and Wise's focus on creating a typology of the phenomenon arose from the "decline in public trust" that began at the end of the 20th century and continued to the present day.<sup>13</sup> As Perry and Wise point out, PSM "should be understood as a dynamic attribute that changes over time and, therefore, may change an individual's willingness to join and to stay with a public organization."<sup>14</sup> These authors outline three motives of public service motivation and explain each one, thus accounting for different motives. The following section distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards within PSM theory. Indeed, the societal context inhabited by the public organization and its workforce continually changes.

## **2. PSM Motives: Norm-Based, Affective, and Rational**

Perry and Wise have been the leading researchers on public service motivation and identified three predominant public service motives: norm-based, affective, and rational.<sup>15</sup> This section outlines each type of PSM. It also explains the relationship between motive type and the job sector in which it is prevalent.

### ***a. Norm-Based***

Norm-based is the conventional understanding of PSM in which the motivation is to serve the community while promoting a sense of civic duty and equality for the greater good. The norm-based motive for joining the public service "is a desire to serve the public

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<sup>12</sup> R. Paul Battaglio, *Public Human Resource Management: Strategies and Practices in the 21st Century* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015); Frederick Mosher, *Democracy and the Public Service*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Bradley E. Wright and Adam M. Grant, "Unanswered Questions about Public Service Motivation: Designing Research to Address Key Issues of Emergence and Effects," *Public Administration Review* 70, no. 5 (2010): 691–700, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2010.02197.x>.

<sup>13</sup> Tom Fox, "Morale Is down, but Federal Employees Remain Dedicated to Their Agency Missions," *Washington Post*, May 12, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2017/05/12/morale-is-down-but-federal-employees-remain-dedicated-to-their-agency-missions/>; Perry and Wise, "The Motivational Bases of Public Service," 367.

<sup>14</sup> Perry and Wise, "The Motivational Bases of Public Service," 370.

<sup>15</sup> Perry and Hondeghem, *Motivation in Public Management*; Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise, "Revisiting the Motivational Bases of Public Service"; James L. Perry and Wouter Vandenabeele, "Public Service Motivation Research: Achievements, Challenges, and Future Directions," *Public Administration Review* 75, no. 5 (September 2015): 692–99, <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12430>; and Perry and Wise, "The Motivational Bases of Public Service."



interest.”<sup>16</sup> Another common terminology used to describe a norm-based rationale is an attraction toward civic duty or volunteerism. Many non-profits or government programs frame their marketing to harness that norm-based motive in potential volunteers, from the domestic Teach for America or AmeriCorps to the Department of State’s Peace Corps program. A norm-based justification also encompasses the connection of loyalty to one’s government, as Mosher so eloquently outlines in his early 1980s work *Democracy and the Public Service*.<sup>17</sup>

**b.        *Affective Motive***

An affective or emotional motive directly links to the individual’s personal reason for wanting to serve. This motive will most likely be evident in any entrance or exit responses that may be available for analysis. An affective explanation is linked more to the purpose of the social context or importance of the public organization: the “patriotism of benevolence” that teeters on heroism.<sup>18</sup>

**c.        *Rational Motive***

The third motive, a rational one, reflects more of a stakeholder’s perspective in one’s career. A desire to change policy, influence policymakers, be a part of a legal change, or advocacy for that change all demonstrate the desired motive. A rational justification is the most tangible of the three public service motivation categories. Examples of rational reasons to join the public service are policy change and creation or supporting a public program due to personal affiliations with that program. For instance, a veteran who joins the Department of Veterans Affairs to enact policy would display such a motive.<sup>19</sup> All three motives play into the composition of one’s perception of identity. Still, a rational

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<sup>16</sup> Perry and Wise, “The Motivational Bases of Public Service,” 368.

<sup>17</sup> Specifically, the author describes the advantages of harnessing norm-based motive as “very substantial. They include a relatively high sense of *loyalty* and *devotion* of the members to the system; and insofar as the system is identified with the organization and its purposes.” Mosher, *Democracy and the Public Service*, 153.

<sup>18</sup> H. George Frederickson and David K. Hart, “The Public Service and the Patriotism of Benevolence,” *Public Administration Review* 45, no. 5 (1985): 548, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3109929>.

<sup>19</sup> Perry and Wise, “The Motivational Bases of Public Service,” 368.

explanation may be the most potent demonstration of one's motivation to change the realm of the public sector.

### 3. Measuring PSM: Sub-category Creation

Perry's initial questionnaire laid the groundwork for measuring the development of public service motivation. The first measurement tool used in 1996 consists of six PSM categories. However, after initial findings, Perry combined the original six into four due to statistical significance found in the data from the "social justice" and "civic duty" centric questions: public interest, public policymaking, compassion, and self-sacrifice.<sup>20</sup> The correlation "between civic duty and public interest exceeded .93" after the initial data gathering, so Perry combined the two in the second round.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, the correlation between social justice and public interest was a whopping .96 in the first iteration, thus combining both civic duty and social justice in the second round within the public interest category.<sup>22</sup> Due to the similarity in the data between public interest and self-sacrifice, Perry compared a three versus a four-dimension model using the chi-square test, concluding that the "four-dimension model is superior to the three-dimension."<sup>23</sup> Appendix A is the complete category statement list used for the analysis explained in chapter 4.

Perry's initial attempt at designing a tool to measure public service motivation was highly successful, and other studies continued to build upon his original research.<sup>24</sup> PSM

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<sup>20</sup> James L. Perry, "Measuring Public Service Motivation: An Assessment of Construct Reliability and Validity," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 6, no. 1 (January 1996): 15, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024303>.

<sup>21</sup> Perry, 14.

<sup>22</sup> Perry, 14.

<sup>23</sup> Perry, 19.

<sup>24</sup> Alonso and Lewis, "Public Service Motivation and Job Performance"; Alonso and Lewis; Bright, "Public Employees with High Levels of Public Service Motivation"; Julian Le Grand, "Knights and Knaves Return: Public Service Motivation and the Delivery of Public Services," *International Public Management Journal* 13, no. 1 (February 26, 2010): 56–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967490903547290>; Katherine C. Naff and John Crum, "Working for America: Does Public Service Motivation Make a Difference?," *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 19, no. 4 (1999): 5–16, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X9901900402>; Bradley E. Wright, Robert K. Christensen, and Kimberley Roussin Isett, "Motivated to Adapt? The Role of Public Service Motivation as Employees Face Organizational Change," *Public Administration Review* 73, no. 5 (2013): 738–47, <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12078>; and Wright and Grant, "Unanswered Questions about Public Service Motivation."

on a global scale revealed that public service meaning interpretations along with employee motivation depends on socioeconomic and cultural background.<sup>25</sup> Bright's research on demographic related data and public service motivation theory draws on previous research data, resulting in the following hypothesis:

Public employees with high levels of public service motivation will be older, female, and minorities and have higher levels of education than will employees with lower levels of public service motivation.<sup>26</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is not to address how demographics can shape one's public service motive. Still, at this stage of public service motivation research, specific demographics may exhibit higher PSM levels than others.

#### **4. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Rewards**

Public service motivation theory that argues for extrinsic rewards for high performance contradicts the PSM evidence suggesting successful employee rewards tools should be intrinsic. Designing an effective incentive program for workforce retention is no easy feat, especially in the public sector in which financial fringe benefits are not possible.<sup>27</sup> However, current practices to reward good behavior or exceptional work tend to be tangible rewards. Based on personal experience, these real benefits are usually monetary after receiving a high-performance rating at the end of the fiscal year or "time off awards" to be used within the same year. This section reviews how PSM theory defines intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards.

##### **a. Intrinsic Rewards**

Professional development opportunities, training, flexible hours for work-life balance, and mentorship are examples of intrinsic rewards. Likewise, performing meaningful work is also a significant intrinsic reward in one of the four PSM categories. A

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<sup>25</sup> Bradley E. Wright, Robert K. Christensen, and Sanjay K. Pandey, "Measuring Public Service Motivation: Exploring the Equivalence of Existing Global Measures," *International Public Management Journal* 16, no. 2 (2013): 197–223, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2013.817242>; Wright, Christensen, and Pandey; and Wright and Grant, "Unanswered Questions about Public Service Motivation."

<sup>26</sup> Bright, "Public Employees with High Levels of Public Service Motivation," 141.

<sup>27</sup> Perry and Wise, "The Motivational Bases of Public Service," 371.

study of British households conducted by Georgellis in the early 2000s revealed that, out of approximately 10,000 individuals who participated in the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), “people join the public sector mainly because it offers individuals with PSM the opportunity to carry out pro-social activities. Higher wages or better extrinsic rewards are not the driving force behind” transitioning from private to public sector jobs.”<sup>28</sup> The Georgellis study concludes that financial gain or work schedules do not significantly influence people from switching from the private to the public sector.<sup>29</sup> The study stresses that harnessing PSM in employees “will increase organizational efficiency” and “reduces the need for high-powered incentives.”<sup>30</sup> Although the Georgellis study does not target private sector motivations, it does support results from targeted public sector research that highlights the importance of intrinsic benefits of public sector employment.

#### ***b. Extrinsic Rewards***

Monetary rewards, time-off awards, or coveted office spaces are all examples of extrinsic rewards. Traditionally, the federal government had limits in awarding extrinsic rewards due to funding allocation restrictions or seniority calculations. However, to compete with the less restrictive private sector, most federal agencies use a performance management form or metric that results in a quantitative performance rating calculation. This performance rating then corresponds to a monetary or time off reward for the employee, sometimes dependent upon the employee’s preference.<sup>31</sup>

### **5. Conclusion**

Public Service Motivation (PSM) Theory, as derived by Perry and Wise in the early 1990s, still holds to ethnographic research conducted globally to pinpoint what PSM means. An array of public service motivation studies has verified the validity of Perry’s

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<sup>28</sup> Yannis Georgellis, Elisabetta Iossa, and Vurain Tabvuma, “Crowding Out Public Service Motivation” (Centre for Economic Development and Institutions, Brunel University, June 2008), 10–11, <https://ideas.repec.org/p/edb/cedidp/08-07.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Georgellis, Iossa, and Tabvuma, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Georgellis, Iossa, and Tabvuma, 2–3.

<sup>31</sup> “Policy, Data, Oversight,” government, Performance Management, accessed January 3, 2021, <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/performance-management/measuring/>.

original PSM statements, even going so far as to test them on an international scale.<sup>32</sup> PSM theory includes three origins of motive: norm-based, affective, and rational. What began as PSM theory statement prompts are now standardized as four PSM categories: public interest, compassion, policymaking, and self-sacrifice. PSM theory also defines the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards and states that employees motivated by PSM prefer intrinsic rewards. The following section reviews research on the intersection of PSM and values associated with organizational goals and policy changes.

## **B. WORKPLACE FIT CONGRUENCE**

Public service motivation (PSM) is a contextual trait; it exists in a social environment continually influenced by external factors. An organization may express its values through policy setting or goal declarations in the form of a mission statement. Ideally, the value associated with an organization's policies and mission should align with an employee's motivation to work at that organization. However, what if there is a misalignment, or 'misfit,' between the organization and its employees? First, this section will review research conducted on value congruence and public service motivation. Next, this section will examine research on the interaction between policy changes and levels of employee PSM.

### **1. Assessing Value Congruence**

Perry continued his work on public service motivation to expand to value congruence and its association with PSM. Drawing upon established definitions of organizational values, research into the value of value "have found that congruence between individual and organizational values is positively related to positive work attitudes, including employee satisfaction."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, establishing clear organizational values that employees perceive to be important may generate a more substantial alignment

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<sup>32</sup> Wright, Christensen, and Pandey, "Measuring Public Service Motivation"; Alonso and Lewis, "Public Service Motivation and Job Performance"; and Perry, "Measuring Public Service Motivation."

<sup>33</sup> Laurie E. Paarlberg and James L. Perry, "Values Management: Aligning Employee Values and Organization Goals," *The American Review of Public Administration* 37, no. 4 (December 1, 2007): 390, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074006297238>.

of importance between an organization and its workforce. Key findings from value research include discovering that “organization goals are motivating employees to the extent that such strategic goals reflect employees’ internal affective, normative, and task-oriented values,” or the three PSM value bases as discussed in the previous section.<sup>34</sup> Values may also be defined within the PSM context “to ‘do good’ for others and society.”<sup>35</sup>

Strong congruence of value between organization and workforce is a healthy goal. Without it, employees may continue to honor the values they perceive as the most important, rather than what the organization states are of the most importance. This could “be of little help, or even detrimental, to achieving the broader objectives of the organization. It is therefore critical to study how values—and value congruence—relate to and condition PSM in organizational contexts.”<sup>36</sup>

The research discussed does not try to claim how to manage employee value association, but rather how to decrease misalignment between organizational values and employee values. Employees with solid PSM possess value systems influenced by various external factors, but the research suggests that an organization can socialize value alignment.<sup>37</sup> The following section discusses how changes in an organization’s policies are influential in employee PSM levels.

## **2. Policy Change Motivational Effects**

Policy changes are common in the federal service. Research on PSM and value congruence suggests that these changes may influence employees’ motivation to serve and the satisfaction they derive from public service. Research conducted in the cross-section of the policy change and its possible effects on PSM reveal that change may influence PSM categories, some more than others. Specifically, researchers asked, can policy changes “introduce or exacerbate a misfit between the personal motive of individual public service

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<sup>34</sup> Paarlberg and Perry, 396.

<sup>35</sup> Jensen, Andersen, and Jacobsen, “Only When We Agree! How Value Congruence Moderates the Impact of Goal-Oriented Leadership on Public Service Motivation,” 14.

<sup>36</sup> Jensen, Andersen, and Jacobsen, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Paarlberg and Perry, “Values Management,” 405.

providers to ‘do good’ for others?”<sup>38</sup> A study on Danish policy changes on general medical practitioners measured the changes in the four different PSM categories’ levels, which revealed shifts in PSM categories. The cause for changes in the PSM category and level, according to the study, “may be that the individuals redirect their motivation to do good for others and society from one form to another when faced by exogenous shocks such as a policy change.”<sup>39</sup> The results are both a shift in the type of PSM category employees identify with and an overall decline in PSM levels or “lasting negative motivational effects.”<sup>40</sup> The research results indicated a rise in the employees’ level of compassion coupled with a decrease in identifying with “an attraction to policy making,” creating a “substitution effect.”<sup>41</sup> While studies of PSM dynamics and the relationship between PSM and value congruence are limited, existing studies suggest that these relationships exist and require further exploration.<sup>42</sup>

### **3. Conclusion**

This section discussed existing research in the fields of PSM and workplace value congruence. Specifically, research suggests an interplay in values between employees in the public sector and PSM-related retention due to the attraction of helping others in public service. Existing research also indicates that policy changes may create a stronger or weaker fit between the organization and its employees. Thus, further research in the PSM realm, organizational values, and fits of employee motivations and goals is beneficial for improving retention and employee satisfaction. The following section will summarize the Cynefin framework used as a sense-making tool for my interpretive study’s implications in chapter 5.

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<sup>38</sup> Jensen, Kjeldsen, and Vestergaard, “How Is Public Service Motivation Affected by Regulatory Policy Changes?,” 467.

<sup>39</sup> Jensen, Kjeldsen, and Vestergaard, 482.

<sup>40</sup> Jensen, Kjeldsen, and Vestergaard, 465.

<sup>41</sup> Jensen, Kjeldsen, and Vestergaard, 482.

<sup>42</sup> Jensen, Kjeldsen, and Vestergaard, 466.

### C. CYNEFIN FRAMEWORK

Public service motivation theory points out that the origins and context of employee motivation are dependent upon a multitude of factors, including one's situational environment. In this context, a tool for unpacking such problems, the Cynefin framework, may be helpful. The Welsh word equivalent for habitat, "cynefin" was chosen for the sense-making framework's name "to remind us that all human interactions are strongly influenced and frequently determined by patterns of our multiple experiences."<sup>43</sup> David Snowden and Mary Boone developed this framework to help leaders tackle complex problems using a scientific approach to form multiple possible solutions to an impossible situation.

Rather than a standard matrix that weighs the positives versus the negatives of proposed solutions, the Cynefin framework allows for the evolution of a problem in various dimensions. As Snowden and Boone describe, "Four [states]—simple, complicated, complex, and chaotic— require leaders to diagnose situations and to act in contextually appropriate ways. The fifth—disorder—applies when it is unclear which of the other four contexts is predominant."<sup>44</sup> The Cynefin framework, as depicted in Figure 1, provides a situational awareness framework that applies to any situation.

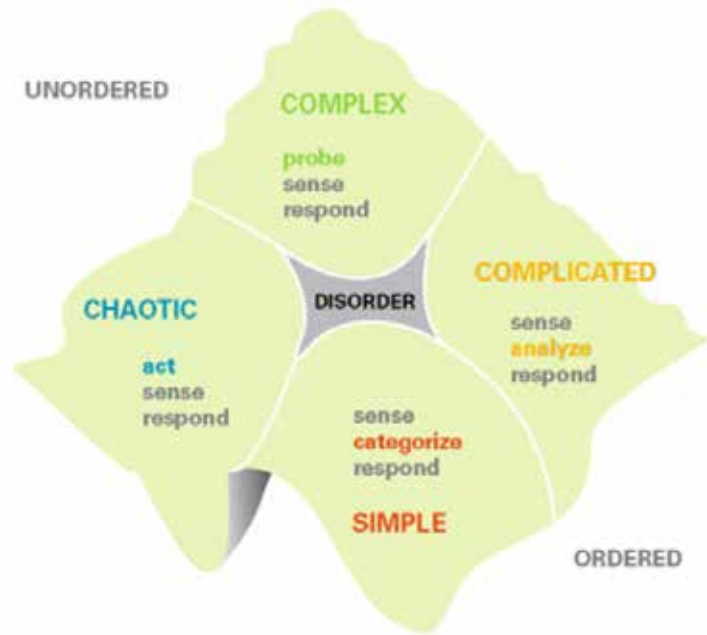
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<sup>43</sup> C. F. Kurtz and D. J. Snowden, "The New Dynamics of Strategy: Sense-Making in a Complex and Complicated World," *IBM Systems Journal* 42, no. 3 (2003): 467, <https://doi.org/10.1147/sj.423.0462>.

<sup>44</sup> David J. Snowden and Mary E. Boone, "A Leader's Framework for Decision Making," *Harvard Business Review* 85, no. 11 (November 2007): 70.



Figure 1. Cynefin Framework<sup>45</sup>



The Cynefin framework provides a basis for defining the first response to a situation based on which realm the problem may inhabit. In the next section, I will outline the characteristics that are unique to each Cynefin domain quadrant. Complete application of the Cynefin framework to my interpretive study results is in the implications section in chapter 5.

### 1. Cynefin Domain Attributes

The Cynefin framework consists of four domains, as depicted in Figure 1. Each section attributes to a call to action sequence dependent upon the quadrant's level of complexity. This is a sense-making framework designed for leaders to interpret an event or situation in any Cynefin domain based on the person's perspective in the form of emergence order.<sup>46</sup> The four parts outlined below are boundaries of the sense-making process. These boundaries, coupled with the "use of narratives to enable multi-perspective

<sup>45</sup> Source: Snowden and Boone, 72.

<sup>46</sup> Kurtz and Snowden, "The New Dynamics of Strategy," 464.

understanding in the complex domain,” is how I interpreted my findings in chapter 4’s analysis section and the implications section in chapter 5.

**a.        *Ordered Known Domain***

The simple state of the Cynefin framework in the ordered dimension is one of categorization. If a problem lies within the simple space, it is within an ordered state. The simple form applies when a system is running smoothly. The simple state is applicable when categorization is easily performed, like organizing a subject in chronological order. The relationship between cause and effect is transparent in this domain.<sup>47</sup>

**b.        *Ordered Knowable Domain***

For complicated situations, sense-making is the first step in addressing any arising issues but remains within an ordered environment. Here there are known problems, and the organization is well situated to learn about the situation and respond accordingly. There are known cause-and- relationships, but they may be complicated and stretch over long periods.<sup>48</sup> It is still a comfortable space for the organization to reside.

**c.        *Unordered Complex Domain***

For complex situations, the Cynefin framework suggests the following order of actions to provide an adequate domain for the emerging issues: probe, sense, and respond.<sup>49</sup> Unlike the previously mentioned complicated domain, we have now shifted from the ordered side of the domain to the unordered side, “the domain of complexity theory.”<sup>50</sup> In this space, patterns emerge in unanticipated ways. Without reliable patterns, the organization’s first response is to probe the situation. Kurtz and Snowden stress that

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<sup>47</sup> David J. Snowden and Mary E. Boone, “A Leader’s Framework for Decision Making,” *Harvard Business Review* 85, no. 11 (November 1, 2007): 68–76.

<sup>48</sup> Kurtz and Snowden, “The New Dynamics of Strategy,” 468.

<sup>49</sup> Snowden and Boone, “A Leader’s Framework for Decision Making,” 74.

<sup>50</sup> Kurtz and Snowden, “The New Dynamics of Strategy,” 469.

“narrative techniques are particularly powerful in this space” to heighten situational awareness.<sup>51</sup>

#### ***d. Unordered Chaotic Domain***

In chaotic space, cause and effect cease to exist. In this realm of crisis management, the action sequence calls for act-sense-respond.<sup>52</sup> Acting in this domain may range from a solid authoritarian response to force order or structure multiple solution types if new possibilities present themselves while in this chaotic state.

## **2. Conclusion**

The Cynefin framework provides a situational awareness framework that applies to any situation. The sense-making plane, as defined by Snowden, consisted of two realms, order and disorder. Juxtaposed onto those two realms are quadrants with varying levels of complexity, ranging from simple to chaotic. The intersection of the quadrants is where confusion exists. I use the Cynefin framework in chapter 5 to make sense of the implications of the PSM analysis conducted in chapter 4 and call for future in-depth research of said findings.

## **D. CONCLUSION**

This chapter summarizes the major theoretical frameworks used to conduct my interpretive study: Public Service Motivation (PSM) theory, value congruence theory, and the Cynefin framework. Interest in public service motivation (PSM) theory continues to grow as the world becomes more connected. Perry’s categories are still in use today and are rising in popularity on a global scale. The Cynefin Framework provides an excellent framework for situational awareness of analysis findings, as discussed in chapter 5. In the next chapter, I describe the methodology used to perform my analysis of the USCIS mission statement organizational storyline and accompanying employee responses.

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<sup>51</sup> Kurtz and Snowden, 469.

<sup>52</sup> Kurtz and Snowden, 468–69.

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### III. METHODS

This chapter describes the methods I used to analyze USCIS's mission statement evolution from 2003–2020, an interpretive analysis of employees' perceptions of their role, and its fit with USCIS's organizational value. As is typical with interpretive research, I adopted an iterative approach to the research design, allowing my initial exploration of the data to influence later design and analysis stages.<sup>53</sup> After initial reviews of the data, I created memos to capture my observations. I started a research design memo, an initial coding findings memo, the USCIS mission statements' chronology as captured from the *Wayback Machine*, and a surprising findings memo. I also highlighted recurring trends within the data sets in a dedicated note column, saving the marked-up data sets coded not alter the original data sets. These memos influenced the iterative analysis described in this chapter.

This chapter outlines the data sources and the analysis approach I used for three phases of analysis focused on describing the evolution of USCIS's organizational value as shown in its mission statements. This chapter also describes employees' perceptions of their professional identity and role as suggested by their responses, perceptions of their professional identity, and changes in the alignment of the two over time. The chapter concludes by describing how I used the Cynefin framework as a sense-making tool to distill implications and recommendations.

As the author of this thesis, I am aware of my own bias in researching and analyzing public service motivation in USCIS employees. As a RAIO employee since 2017, I took the oath to serve and protect the United States under the USCIS mission as published in 2017. As a previous asylum officer, I have experience deciphering between your moral compass and the policy dictates. Fortunately, I was no longer an officer by the time the USCIS mission changed in 2018, including a string of policy and leadership changes. However, I stayed with RAIO serving in different capacities. Retention issues piqued my

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<sup>53</sup> Joseph Alex Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, 2nd ed, Applied Social Research Methods Series, no. 41 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 5.

interest when I became involved in the hiring process. In less than a year of completing officer certification training, most of my training class colleagues moved onto other positions within RAIO or the Field Office Directorate (FOD), citing burnout for their need to change. However, we all stayed within USCIS, which made me curious about *why* we stayed while others left.

Thus, my bias is that I am a USCIS RAIO employee and have been content in my career path with RAIO over the past few years. This thesis serves to document the stories of my fellow employees: their passions, their fears, their concerns. It also helps to establish the evolution of an agency's mission for which I have continued to serve. Finally, this thesis is a sincere effort to call for change based on documented research rather than a gut feeling.

#### **A. MISSION STATEMENT: DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS APPROACH**

The USCIS mission statements provided insight into how the organization makes sense of its mission within a changing political and social context. I then collected mission statements and analyzed changes across these critical events described in the following section. I collected USCIS mission statements by first searching online for official messaging from USCIS. I used Google to search the term USCIS. After locating the current mission statement from the official USCIS.gov website, I switched to the Internet Archive's *Wayback Machine* site, a nonprofit that documents historical internet content by showing website changes and allowing older versions access.<sup>54</sup> I searched for which dates had the most captures of the website dating back to 2003, the year of the organization's inception. I reviewed all changes to the "About USCIS" web page from 2003 through 2020, focusing on revisions to the mission statements' content rather than site redesign. I explored how the organization answered the questions: who are we, how do we accomplish our mission, and its effect.

I identified five significant versions of the USCIS mission between 2003–December 2020. The three significant changes to the mission occurred in 2008, March and

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<sup>54</sup> Internet Archive Organization, "Wayback Machine," accessed January 24, 2021, <https://archive.org/web/>.

September of 2009, and 2018. Notably, presidential elections resulting in a change of administration, including political party changes, appeared in 2008 and 2016. I mapped out the political and social contexts surrounding these changes into a contextual timeline that I use in the analysis chapter to explain each mission statement change. I also constructed word clouds using TagCrowd, an online word cloud builder, to create a visual map of words to understand common vocabulary throughout the analyzed mission statements. These word clouds are also available in the analysis chapter as a thematic visual representation of mission statement vocabulary.

## **B. EMPLOYEE RESPONSES: DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS APPROACH**

I analyzed a set of existing USCIS employee survey responses conducted at both the directorate and agency level.<sup>55</sup> I solicited RAIO's Performance Management branch chief for any current response data sets based on three criteria: 1) the similarity of the survey prompts with Perry's PSM questionnaire; 2) preference of larger sample sizes of responses per survey for a more diverse response range; 3) USCIS agency survey results when available supplemented by RAIO specific surveys. Table 1 summarizes the response data set naming conventions, survey collection date, and the number of total responses analyzed.

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<sup>55</sup> USCIS employee response data analyzed in this thesis was collected previously by the agency through a series of voluntary survey initiatives, not by the researcher. The IRB determined that the human subject research in this thesis does not require IRB approval in July 2020.

Table 1. Employee Response Data Sets

Response Data Set Name	Date Collected	Responses
RAIO Employee Post-Exit Interview Summary -Summary of RAIO officer post exit interviews	2015	33
EEO Diversity Climate Survey Questions #85 & #86 -USCIS work environment voluntary survey	2018	228
RAIO Employee Engagement Ignite Initiative - Voluntary survey of all RAIO employees	2018	174
Employee Exit Survey "What did you like best about your most recent position with RAIO?" -RAIO officer post exit interviews 5 years after leaving	2019	13
USCIS Ideascale campaign "Why I Serve" -USCIS voluntary service survey for Public Service Recognition Week	2020	25
"Why Become a RAIO Officer" Training Survey -new officer voluntary survey given during training certification	2020	1639
Analyst University application essays -USCIS joint directorate elective training program for analysts	2020	123
<b>Grand Response Total</b>		<b>2235</b>

## 1. Data Selection and Survey Descriptions

I received anonymized data sets to use for this thesis research. Responses retained the date of the response, the response context, and the employee's position title (if available). I reviewed each employee response data set for relevancy to this study; data sets generally referenced the 'why' behind employment with USCIS. Six out of eight data sets pertained to employee motivation. Two small data sets represented departing RAIO employees and thus provided responses referencing what RAIO could do to improve retention. Another two data sets came from a USCIS diversity climate survey that provided a larger agency context. The last two data sets selected precisely target "Why I Serve" USCIS and "Why Became a RAIO Officer," offering a diverse data set of responses that demonstrate public service motivation both on the USCIS agency and RAIO directorate levels.<sup>56</sup>

The 2015 Summary of Post-Exit Interviews is the earliest data set available at the time of this analysis. The purpose of the post-exit interviews was to identify causes of

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<sup>56</sup> USCIS, "Why I Serve Ideascale Campaign," unpublished dataset (Washington, DC, May 2020); and RAIO Training, "New RAIO Officer Entrance Survey," unpublished dataset (Washington, DC, June 2020).



attrition in RAIO interviewing officers and improve retention strategies.<sup>57</sup> The interviews posed eight questions, with questions one and seven providing the most PSM-centric responses. Question 1 “What did you like best about your previous job at RAIO?” evoked a 67% response rate referencing “noble cause” and “mission.”<sup>58</sup>

RAIO designed the 2018 RAIO Employee Engagement Ignite Initiative to collect anonymous feedback on how the directorate could improve the employee experience and work environment. As part of the Ignite program, RAIO headquarters sent employees with human-centered design (HCD) training to the various asylum field offices and the refugee affairs offices to conduct interviews with staff who volunteered to share their ideas. I recognized some responses reflected PSM qualities and thus included them in my interpretive study.

RAIO launched the 2019 Employee Exit Survey as an initiative to reach out to previous employees to gather information as part of a more considerable effort to address RAIO’s increasing attrition rates. By the summer of 2019, RAIO recruited four people for every asylum officer position to maintain staffing numbers. The 2019 survey focused on finding out what the directorate was doing right to amplify the interviewing officer’s positive attributes. The survey results to the question “What did you like best about your most recent position with RAIO?” indicated PSM presence.<sup>59</sup> Though the data set was small, it was the only 2019 survey available to the researcher during thesis composition.

The Ideascale’s campaign was a USCIS agency initiative to capture employee motivations to serve. The Ideascale campaign “Why I Serve” for Public Service Recognition Week launched in early May 2020 as rumors of a possible furlough began to circulate. By the time the Ideascale campaign had closed, the possibility of furlough had gone public, marking the first time USCIS had faced such a crisis. This may account for

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<sup>57</sup> RAIO PMB, “What Our Employees Have to Say About RAIO: Summary of Post-Exit Interviews with Asylum and Refugee Officers,” unpublished data summary (Washington, DC: Refugee Asylum and International Operations USCIS, 2016), 1.

<sup>58</sup> RAIO PMB, 1.

<sup>59</sup> RAIO PMB, “RAIO Exit Survey: What Did You Like Best About Your Most Recent Position with RAIO?,” unpublished dataset (Washington, DC, 2019).

the low response rate: out of approximately 19,000 employees, only 25 responded. The “Why I Serve” Ideascale responses had the lowest response rate of all of the data sets analyzed. One may extrapolate that employees may have found it challenging to respond to the motivation prompt while waiting for a furlough notice.

The “Why Become a RAIO Officer Training Survey was conducted amid the first furlough extension. Newly hired interviewing officers in training on refugee and asylum processing completed a survey during their summer virtual six-week training. Traditionally an in-person training held at the Glynco, GA training facility, the new round of officers were part of the new all-virtual training initiative due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as fiscal constraints. Additionally, the employees participating in this June 2020 training resulted from a massive hiring surge initiative from late 2019, under which staffing levels hovering in the 74% soared to the high 90s. Many new hires were new to the government or the agency, so it was crucial to include responses from the newest public service members in this thesis research. The survey consists of various background and experience prompts, but the final prompt of “Why Become a RAIO Officer?” was included in this study.<sup>60</sup> The responses provide complementary and contrasting responses to the Ideascale campaign prompt of “Why I Serve” from only a month prior. Due to the anonymity of the response data, it is possible that responses to both surveys could be from the same employee. However, the response content from the USCIS survey has many claims of serving for an extended time. In contrast, the new RAIO officer survey responses focus more on setting expectations and captures what motivational values new employees are bringing to RAIO. The response rate of the RAIO officer survey is much higher than that of the USCIS survey.

## **2. Data Analysis Approach**

I began the analysis by scanning each survey data set for PSM relevancy, noting any interesting trends in an initial coding memo. Next, I coded the survey responses, identifying and coding excerpts according to Perry’s four subcategorizations of public

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<sup>60</sup> RAIO Training, “New RAIO Officer Entrance Survey.”

service motivation (PSM). I reviewed each response in the surveys to identify the exact or similar language found in Perry’s 40-item questionnaire. I focused on the Perry prompts that are non-reversed statements; that is, I excluded prompts such as “I don’t care” or “I do not believe.” This exclusion narrowed the prompt list from 40 statements to 29 statements in the categories listed in Appendix A. I grouped and color-coded excerpts of text into Perry’s four subcategories. I grouped the subheadings “social justice” and “civic duty” under the larger category of “commitment to the public interest” per Perry’s final categorization as outlined in the methods chapter. Some excerpts appeared as multiple PSM categories, so I identified primary and secondary PSM types for those excerpts. I color-coded excerpts as shown in Table 2 and organized the color-coded passages in a spreadsheet with the PSM category, respondent number, and the survey name. Finally, I tabulated the frequency of each PSM category in the survey data.

Table 2. Response PSM Color Coding

<b>PSM Category</b>	<b>Color</b>
Attraction to Policy Making	Blue
Commitment to Public Interest	Yellow
Social Justice (sub)	Yellow
Civic Duty (sub)	Yellow
Compassion	Green
Self-Sacrifice	Pink

Following the initial coding, I interpreted the data by rereading the excerpts and creating visual displays.<sup>61</sup> I grouped quotes that suggested employees’ perspectives on the following questions related to professional identity: who we are, whom we serve, how do

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<sup>61</sup> Matthew B. Miles and A. M. Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994).

we serve, and to what effect? I labeled the groupings with an excerpt that represented the overall theme for each question. The Individual Professional Identity Summary Table in the analysis chapter displays the representative label and examples of additional quotes. The PSM Frequency and Intrinsic Rewards Summary Table in the analysis chapter documents the summation of PSM frequency in the responses and prominent intrinsic rewards associated with PSM types, as evident in the excerpts.

Finally, I constructed word clouds using TagCrowd, an online word cloud builder, to create a visual map of words to understand common vocabulary throughout the response data. The tool clusters words based on the frequency of use in the text provided. I flagged the tool to ignore modifying words and articles such as “the, and, or” etc., so the map would build a more comprehensive word cloud. The word cloud notes the frequency of word use next to each entry, and the larger font indicates a higher frequency of the word use in the data set.

### **C. ASSESSING CONGRUENCE**

To assess alignment between the USCIS’ presentation of its organizational identity as shown in its mission statements and employees’ perceptions of their professional identity and role as suggested by their responses, I again reviewed the data. I distilled a key theme or tagline from the two periods’ mission statements before and after Donald Trump’s election. Then, I distilled key overarching themes or storylines in the employee survey responses. I identified four overarching themes. I mapped the overarching organizational and individual storyline themes in a visual display and assessed the changes in alignment over time.

### **D. CYNEFIN DOMAINS: MAKING SENSE OF ‘FIT’**

I drew on the Cynefin framework to make sense of my findings and to distill implications and recommendations. How to attract and retain employees who are public service motivated during a deep social division around the organizations’ activities and across changes in stark changes in administration and policy is a complex problem. The

Cynefin framework provided a framework for diagnosing the situation and making recommendations.<sup>62</sup>

The framework suggests that decision-making in a complex situation—when cause and effect are undeterminable at the moment but later identified—should adopt a probe-sense-respond approach. Following this approach, I revisited the employee response data to probe, make further sense and recommend responses. I examined the responses to understand why the employees chose to join the federal public service and what the public service position lacked that drove them to leave RAIO or USCIS. I also identified and extracted employees' recommendations for changing the current USCIS culture. I reviewed these excerpts and iterated between them and my previous analysis to elaborate on the problem, distill implications of my findings, and propose recommendations.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided an overview of the methods used to interpret USCIS mission statements and employee responses to surveys. I described the data sources and the analysis approach for three phases of analysis and distillation of implications and recommendations. The next chapter will provide a deeper understanding of my interpretive study of the USCIS mission through an organizational and an employee-based perspective.

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<sup>62</sup> Snowden and Boone, "A Leader's Framework for Decision Making," November 2007, 71.

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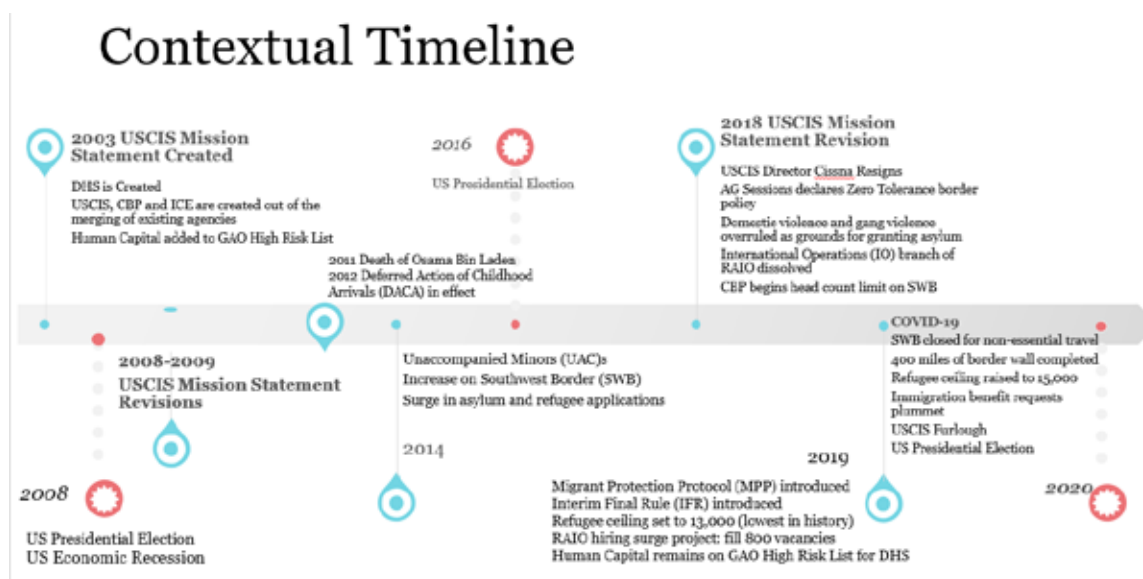
## IV. ANALYSIS

This chapter presents three phases of analysis that answer the questions: How does USCIS frame its mission statement, and how does that presentation evolve? Why do employees believe they serve with USCIS? What is the fit between employees' perceptions of their contribution to the mission and the organization's mission? First, the chapter analyzes USCIS's presentation of its mission values, as reflected in its mission statement published on the official USCIS website. Then, the chapter interprets employees' understandings of their professional role, focusing on their motivations for serving and the intrinsic rewards derived from their work as gleaned from their responses to internal questionnaires. Finally, the chapter integrates these two steps to explore the congruency or 'fit' between the organization's presentation of its mission and employees' perceptions.

### A. EVOLUTION OF THE USCIS MISSION STATEMENT 2003–2020

The story of USCIS, as depicted through its mission statements agency's goals, reflects the within the political and social context in which the statements were designed and published. As shown in Figure 2, changes in an agency's mission do not occur in a vacuum but respond to external events, in particular administration changes.

Figure 2. Social and Political Chronology



During USCIS’s lifespan, the administration changed from the Bush administration to the Obama administration, and finally to the Trump administration. The mission statement evolved with the changes in administration. Mapping this evolution of purpose using the *Wayback Machine* internet archive tool revealed shifts in the presentation of the organization’s identity over two major periods, before and after the election of Donald J. Trump. The following sections first describe critical changes in the mission statement following changes in administration. It then summarizes the organization’s identity as expressed in the mission statement, focusing on who we are, who we serve, and what effect before and during the Trump administration.

The social context during the mission statement modification, as seen in Figure 2 is also essential. As discussed in the literature review, human capital for DHS has been on GAO’s High Risk List since 2003.<sup>63</sup> The United States suffered from a historical economic recession during the 2008–2009 mission statement modifications. Although the heightened alert of terrorism decreased a bit with the capture and killing of Osama Bin Laden in 2011, concern for the Southwest Border (SWB) began in the early 2010s, with numbers of unaccompanied minors (UAC)s seeking asylum reaching historical highs in 2014–2019. By the time the 2018 mission statement change occurred, various policy changes and executive orders, including the border wall, were well underway and in effect by 2019.

## **1. Before Trump: Key Changes**

USCIS’s mission statement changed three times before Donald J. Trump’s presidency. A political or social external event marked each change. Below is a summary of the different iterations of the USCIS mission statement.

### ***a. In the Beginning: 2003***

At the beginning of USCIS’s existence, the messaging emphasized protecting the United States and improving the experience of those using the service. USCIS grew from 15,000 to 18,000 federal and contractor employees stationed in 250 offices worldwide from

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<sup>63</sup> Government Accountability Office, “High Risk.”



2003 to the summer of 2018. The mission statement went through various iterations with changes in administrations.

The original 2003 statement connects USCIS with DHS as a whole, citing “national security” as the primary concern, followed by tackling existing immigration backlogs and “implement solutions for improving immigration customer services.”<sup>64</sup> A third-person web page’s title of “This is USCIS” represents the mission’s voice:

In support of the DHS overall mission, the immediate priorities of the new USCIS are to promote national security, continue to eliminate immigration adjudications backlogs, and implement solutions for improving immigration customer services. The USCIS will continue efforts to fundamentally transform and improve the delivery of immigration and citizenship services...

The new U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will continue the commitment to service set forth by the INS, modernizing the business of immigration to improve processing times and preserving national security.<sup>65</sup>

As described in the literature review, USCIS accompanies two other immigration prongs: Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Creating a three-pronged approach to immigration separated adjudicative immigration duties, or case decision-making duties (USCIS), from the law enforcement element of removing undocumented people or illegal immigration (CBP and ICE).

***b. Five Years Later: 2008***

In 2008, in the waning period of George W. Bush’s administration, the mission simplified to reflect two purposes: 1) “the administration of immigration and naturalization adjudication functions” and 2) the creation and maintenance of immigration-related

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<sup>64</sup> “This Is USCIS,” government, December 4, 2003, <https://web.archive.org/web/20031204044836/http://uscis.gov/graphics/aboutus/thisisimm/index.htm>.

<sup>65</sup> USCIS.

“policies and priorities” displayed in a comprehensive bullet-style list.<sup>66</sup> Adjudicative functions are decision-making actions performed by certified immigration, asylum, or refugee officer. In this iteration of USCIS mission goals, a more neutral language of administering existing functions and policy replaces any direct reference to national security or protection.

USCIS is responsible for the administration of immigration and naturalization adjudication functions and establishing immigration services policies and priorities.<sup>67</sup>

Even the title of the website, “About USCIS,” resumed a more passive voice. After five years, USCIS was an established agency, changing the tone from the introductory “This is USCIS” to a simple business heading of “About USCIS.”

**c. A New Administration: March 2009**

Following the 2009 election of Barack Obama, the mission took a couple of sharp turns, beginning with its March 2009 revision:

We establish immigration services, policies and priorities to preserve America’s legacy as a nation of immigrants while ensuring that no one is admitted who is a threat to public safety. [sic] To accomplish this, we “adjudicate” (decide upon) the petitions and applications of potential immigrants.<sup>68</sup>

The mission shifted from a third-person explanation of USCIS to the first person, connecting the mission of USCIS to those carrying it out. The tone went back to national security and cited its mission to “preserve America’s legacy as a nation of immigrants” for the first time.<sup>69</sup> Citing the United States as a “nation of immigrants” was an instrumental

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<sup>66</sup> “About USCIS,” government, About US, March 16, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080316061631/http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb1d4c2a3e5b9ac89243c6a7543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=2af29c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD&vgnnextchannel=2af29c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>.

<sup>67</sup> USCIS.

<sup>68</sup> “ABOUT US,” government, September 30, 2009, <https://web.archive.org/web/20090930211556/http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb1d4c2a3e5b9ac89243c6a7543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=2af29c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD&vgnnextchannel=2af29c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>.

<sup>69</sup> USCIS.

element of the USCIS mission. The mission to help or protect immigrants was a frequent motivational factor in the employee responses. The mission in the March 2009 version framed the “immigration services, policies and priorities” as to how USCIS both serves and protects. The threat portrayed in the March 2009 mission was public safety at large, not specifically just for the United States.

***d. We Are a Nation of Immigrants: September 2009***

The mission statement changed again in September 2009 to remain the same for almost a decade until 2018:

*USCIS will secure America’s promise as a nation of immigrants by providing accurate and useful information to our customers, granting immigration and citizenship benefits, promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship, and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system. (emphasis added)*<sup>70</sup>

National security is still present in the mission under the guise of “ensuring the integrity” of immigration, but introduced a new element of securing “America’s promise as a nation of immigrants” with “our customers.”<sup>71</sup> The mission reflected more of a ‘satisfaction guaranteed’ model rather than a government agency mission statement. However, this particular mission statement connected the mission of USCIS as part of the fabric of what America is: a promise of opportunity that it will secure. The “will secure” is a statement of action, whereas the previous message opened with “we establish.”<sup>72</sup> The change from a policy-centric narrative of creating and carrying out immigration policy to “ensuring the integrity of our immigration system” coupled with “will secure” at the beginning of the statement added a stronger sense of authority.<sup>73</sup> It also once again linked USCIS to the

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<sup>70</sup> USCIS; and Richard Gonzales, “America No Longer A ‘Nation Of Immigrants,’ USCIS Says,” *NPR.Org*, February 22, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/22/588097749/america-no-longer-a-nation-of-immigrants-uscis-says>.

<sup>71</sup> USCIS, “About Us.”

<sup>72</sup> USCIS; USCIS, “About Us,” government, About USCIS, May 1, 2009, <https://web.archive.org/web/20090501003005/http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb1d4c2a3e5b9ac89243c6a7543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=2af29c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD&vgnextchannel=2af29c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>.

<sup>73</sup> USCIS, “About Us.”

mission by using “our immigration system.” The narrative interlinked purpose and responsibility of the three key players in the immigration system: those who are seeking immigration benefits, those who are performing the work of USCIS, and the United States as a whole.

Furthermore, the “About Us” USCIS mission page went a step further to connect the mission goals with “we are the 18,000 government employees and contractors,” mapping the mission goal to the workforce carrying it out. This round highlighted four core values as part of the mission: integrity, respect, ingenuity, and vigilance.<sup>74</sup> Each value included all USCIS business actors: new immigrants or “customers,” citizens, USCIS employees, and the public. One interpretation of the core values signaled a return to the pro-immigrant rhetoric integral part of the “American dream.”

The public may have taken the 2009–2017 USCIS mission statement seriously. Immigration numbers to the United States increased, even though the Obama administration deported the most undocumented immigrants, including under the current Trump Administration.<sup>75</sup> The surge at the Southwest Border (SWB) that began as a trickle in the early 2010s also surged, with record numbers of unaccompanied minors and caravans of people escaping violence and poverty in Central America walking up to ports of entry on the SWB asking for asylum, for “American’s promise.”<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately, the part of the mission statement about “promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship” was not carried out in the way USCIS may have hoped.<sup>77</sup> The threat of gang violence or extreme poverty are not grounds for asylum in the United States, but coyotes (paid

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<sup>74</sup> USCIS.

<sup>75</sup> Alicia Caldwell and Louise Radnofsky, “Why Trump Has Deported Fewer Immigrants Than Obama,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 3, 2019, sec. Politics, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-trump-has-deported-fewer-immigrants-than-obama-11564824601>.

<sup>76</sup> Wendy Fry, “Asylum-Seekers in Mexico Expected to Double by End of 2019 Amid Trump Administration Immigration Crackdown,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, October 22, 2019, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/border-baja-california/story/2019-10-21/sd-me-tijuana-migration-meeting>.

<sup>77</sup> USCIS, “About Us.”

traffickers of migrants) and immigration lawyers looking to make fast cash continued to promise political asylum to this vulnerable population.<sup>78</sup>

## **2. Presentation of Organizational Identity: America, an Immigrant Nation: 2003–2018**

In the period before Donald J. Trump’s presidency, USCIS’s mission statement reflected an identity defined by “preserving America’s promise as a nation of immigrants.”<sup>79</sup> The mission statements changed, but overall portrayed an organization that valued national security. And employees committed to service. Below is a summary of the different elements of the USCIS mission statement.

### ***a. Who Are We?***

The commitment to service outlined in September 2009 included four fundamental values: integrity, respect, ingenuity, and vigilance. Furthermore, the mission statement reframed USCIS employees, describing who they were and whom they were working with rather than serving. “Acting as partners toward a common goal” promoted unity, and being “mindful of the trust of the American people” framed USCIS as an agency that protected and was trusted by who it served. The core values also mentioned a “dynamic work culture” for the first time, sharing that working for USCIS was not just a job, but a “high-performance” work environment that strived “for world-class results” while embracing “ingenuity, resourcefulness, creativity and sound management.”<sup>80</sup>

### ***b. Who Do We Serve?***

The initial mission statement outlined who the agency serves based on the type of immigrant benefit sought, ranging from naturalization services to visitors, worker visas, and other non-permanent residents seeking assistance. This narrative tells the story that

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<sup>78</sup> Katie Benner and Caitlin Dickerson, “Sessions Says Domestic and Gang Violence Are Not Grounds for Asylum,” *The New York Times*, June 11, 2018, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/11/us/politics/sessions-domestic-violence-asylum.html>.

<sup>79</sup> USCIS, “About Us.”

<sup>80</sup> USCIS, “Mission and Core Values,” About Us, July 5, 2020, <https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/mission-and-core-values>.

people interacting with USCIS are seeking to become U.S. citizens. This narrative shifted in April 2009 to “potential immigrants” and transformed again in September of the same year to “customers” since most immigration benefits had a price tag. However, in September, the “who” served expanded to include USCIS employees and U.S. citizens, touching on all three players that form the triangle of immigration: non-citizens, citizens working for USCIS U.S. citizens.

*c. To What Effect?*

The 2003 creation narrative of USCIS focused heavily on national security and reducing case backlog, possibly reflecting its proximity to the 9/11 attacks that heightened U.S. national security and slowed immigration processing. However, elements of support in the mission included “improving immigration customer service” and “delivery of services” that would support both the USCIS workforce and the customers. 2008 and 2009 mission statement revisions expanded upon the previously mentioned customer service experience, citing goals to “successfully integrate immigrants into American civic culture” and “train and promote instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.” In 2009, the mission added “strengthening infrastructure” to support the mission and promotion of a “highly talented workforce.” Thus by 2009, USCIS had begun to form its own culture and mission five years after the transition from INS to USCIS and seven years after 9/11.

*d. Word Cloud Vocabulary Summary*

Figure 3 displays a word cloud of the USCIS mission from 2003 through 2017. The figure shows that the top five words used to describe the USCIS mission are as follows in ascending order: immigration (38 instances), services (21 instances), adjudication (12 instances), USCIS (13 instances), and citizenship (11 instances).

Figure 3. 2003–2017 Mission Vocabulary



Based on the word cloud, the mission in its most simplistic form in 2003 up to early 2018 was “USCIS immigration adjudicative citizenship services,” which does not deviate far from the actual name of the agency, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

### 3. After Trump: Key Changes

With the Trump administration in 2017, USCIS once again took a different direction. The USCIS Mission Statement changed in 2018 as announced by USCIS Director Francis Cissna under the leadership of then DHS Secretary Kirstjen M. Nielsen.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> “USCIS Director L. Francis Cissna on New Agency Mission Statement,” USCIS, February 22, 2018, <https://www.uscis.gov/archive/archive-news/uscis-director-l-francis-cissna-new-agency-mission-statement>.

The change altered who USCIS served and protected. The USCIS Mission Statement remained the same from 2018 through December 2020:

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services *administers* the nation’s lawful immigration system, safeguarding its integrity and promise by efficiently and fairly adjudicating requests for immigration benefits *while protecting Americans*, securing the homeland, and honoring our values. (emphasis added)<sup>82</sup>

First, whom USCIS served goes from “customers” to not mentioned at all. However, as to whom USCIS existed to protect was targeted. First, it promised security as a “nation of immigrants,” alluding to the services that USCIS provided as inclusion. Currently, USCIS “administers” the law and benefits “while protecting Americans.” In the mission statement framework, Americans (define as you will) stood apart from those requesting services (not American) or distinguishing the two actors in the equation: those who serve and those requesting assistance.<sup>83</sup>

USCIS Director Cissna’s communication to explain the logic behind the mission statement change was as follows:

What we do at USCIS is so important to our nation, so meaningful to the applicants and petitioners, and the nature of the work is often so complicated, that we should never allow our work to be regarded as a mere production line or even described in business or commercial terms. In

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Note: All DHS Secretaries under the Trump administration have served less than 300 days. DHS Secretary Nielson served the longest, 1 year and 125 days until her resignation in April 2019, after which the following have served in an acting capacity: Kevin McAleenan April- November 2019, Chad Wolfe November 2019-present.

Meroff, Nick. “Chad Wolf Sworn in as Acting Department of Homeland Security Chief, Ken Cuccinelli to Be Acting Deputy.” Washington Post, November 13, 2019. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/chad-wolf-sworn-in-as-acting-department-of-homeland-security-chief-fifth-under-trump/2019/11/13/6633a614-0637-11ea-8292-c46ee8cb3dce\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/chad-wolf-sworn-in-as-acting-department-of-homeland-security-chief-fifth-under-trump/2019/11/13/6633a614-0637-11ea-8292-c46ee8cb3dce_story.html).

USCIS Directors have exhibited similar attrition. USCIS Director Francis Cissna, appointed by the Trump Administration, was asked to resign by the same administration effective June 2019. Acting USCIS Director Ken Cuccinelli served from June 2019 until becoming Acting Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security on November 13, 2019.

Choi, Matthew, and Anita Kumar. “Citizenship and Immigration Services Chief Resigns.” POLITICO, May 24, 2019. <https://politi.co/2JZrRPD>.

<sup>82</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Services, “About Us,” USCIS, March 6, 2018, <https://www.uscis.gov/aboutus>.

<sup>83</sup> Gonzales, “America No Longer A ‘Nation Of Immigrants,’ USCIS Says.”



particular, referring to applicants and petitioners for immigration benefits, and the beneficiaries of such applications and petitions, as “customers” *promotes an institutional culture that emphasizes the ultimate satisfaction of applicants and petitioners, rather than the correct adjudication of such applications and petitions according to the law. Use of the term leads to the erroneous belief that applicants and petitioners, rather than the American people, are whom we ultimately serve.* All applicants and petitioners should, of course, always be treated with the greatest respect and courtesy, but we can’t forget that we serve the American people [emphasis added].<sup>84</sup>

As with any change in administration, part of public service is to serve both the public and whatever administration currently steers the government. However, although the USCIS mission changed in 2018, the RAIO mission statement remained unchanged:

The Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate leverages its domestic and international presence to assess protection, humanitarian, and other immigration benefits and service requests throughout the world while combatting fraud and protecting national security.<sup>85</sup>

Thus, the RAIO mission statement continued the narrative of being present to support “protection, humanitarian, and other immigration benefits and service requests” first, following with support of the larger mission of USCIS and the DHS of securing the homeland and fraud detection.<sup>86</sup>

#### **4. Presentation of Organizational Identity: Protecting Americans and Securing the Homeland through Lawful Immigration: 2018–2020**

In the period after Donald J. Trump’s election, USCIS’s mission statement reflected an identity defined by “protecting Americans” and “securing the homeland” through “lawful immigration.”<sup>87</sup> Only one mission statement changed during the Trump

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<sup>84</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Services, “USCIS Director L. Francis Cissna on New Agency Mission Statement.”

<sup>85</sup> Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate, *Core Values and Guiding Principles for RAIO Employees*, RAIO Combined Training Program (Washington, DC: RAIO, 2019), 8, [https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/nativedocuments/Core\\_Values\\_and\\_Guiding\\_Principles\\_for\\_RAIO\\_Employees\\_LP\\_RAIO.pdf](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/nativedocuments/Core_Values_and_Guiding_Principles_for_RAIO_Employees_LP_RAIO.pdf).

<sup>86</sup> Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate, 8.

<sup>87</sup> USCIS, “Mission and Core Values | USCIS,” July 5, 2020, <https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/mission-and-core-values>.

administration. Below is a summary of the different elements of the USCIS mission statement.

***a. Who Are We?***

In June 2018, the mission statement pivoted back to 2003's emphasis on national security. Rather than depicting the United States as a "nation of immigrants," the revised statement framed USCIS as an administrator of the "nation's lawful immigration system." The USCIS workforce "honors our values" and was expected to safeguard the "integrity and promise" of the immigration system. Thus, the identity of USCIS shifted to a more protective stance that principally upheld the law and protected Americans. One of the four core values, ingenuity, changed to innovation, but the language in each of the four core values remained unchanged: integrity, respect, innovation, and vigilance. This word swap's significance is essential: innovation signals that the organization is adapting new processes, while ingenuity signifies dedication to solving problems. My interpretation of this vocabulary shift was to make the organization sound new and technological rather than tackling problem-solving.

***b. Who Do We Serve?***

Here, USCIS served "Americans" and "immigrants with lawful presence." There was no mention of the diversity of what "lawful presence" looked like as outlined in earlier years, or those who are applying for lawful presence but do not currently hold it, such as visitors, workers, refugees, asylum seekers, etc. I interpret this language as an intentional move towards dividing three sets of people involved in USCIS business: U.S. citizens, immigrants with some legal status looking to renew or further their status, and the undocumented people trying to obtain status omitted in this narrative. If USCIS, the only agency that handles immigration benefit requests, was not acknowledging a large base of people seeking its services, will those people continue to pursue said benefits? Although this thesis does not dive deeper into the intentions behind the shift in customer focus, one can extrapolate from the various benefit-limiting policies introduced during 2018–2020 timeframe that this led a more considerate effort to change the USCIS narrative.

*c. To What Effect?*

Two specific goals appeared in the 2018 mission statement: 1) to “protect Americans” and “secure the homeland” and 2) to oversee “lawful immigration” and adjudicate “requests for immigration benefits.”<sup>88</sup> Neither workforce support nor immigrant integration efforts were mentioned as in previous years. This return to USCIS’s original story focused on national security and continuing the adjudicative work of INS came at a time when terrorist attacks were at a low. Thus, the daily activity goals for USCIS continued onward. Still, the context within those goals has regressed to a defensive language without a trigger from the original security threat of terrorism. Based on the various Southwest border (SWB) policies introduced in 2019 and 2020 to control undocumented people’s movements at the SWB, the 2018 mission statement was an extension of the border response.

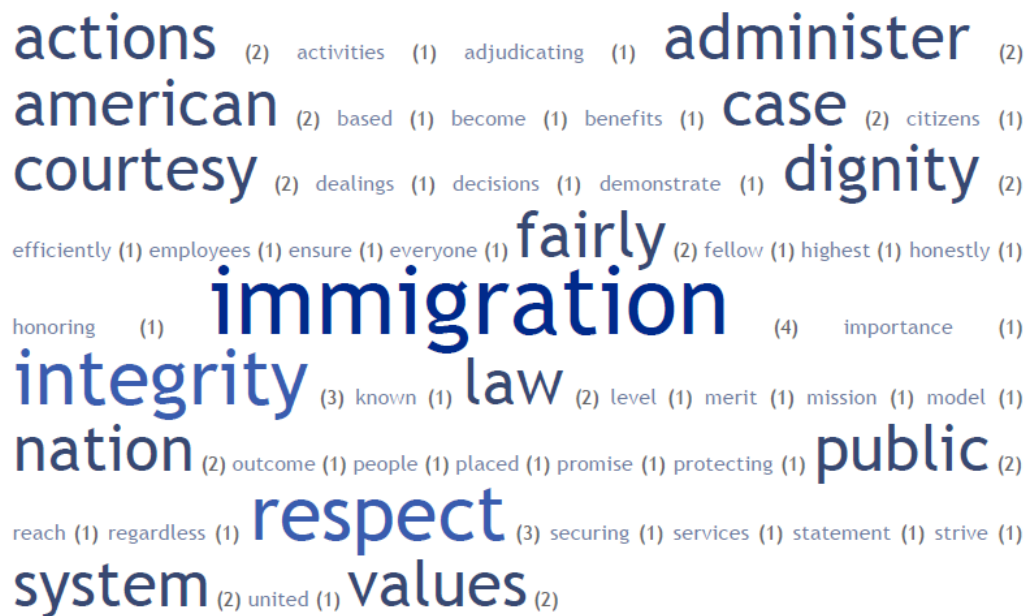
*d. Word Cloud Vocabulary Summary*

Figure 4 displays a word cloud of the USCIS mission from 2018 through 2020. It also shows that the top five words used to describe the USCIS mission are as follows in ascending order: immigration (4 instances), integrity (3 instances), respect (3 instances), and many others occurring twice like values, nation, American, public, fairly, dignity, administer, and law.

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<sup>88</sup> USCIS, “About Us.”

Figure 4. 2018–2020 Mission Vocabulary



Based on the word cloud, the mission in its most simplistic form after the change in 2018–December 2020 was “immigration with integrity and respect, to administer the law fairly with dignity and courtesy for American values, the nation, and the public.” This analysis shows a notable shift from the previous word cloud, where the repeated vocabulary was USCIS spelled out. Here, a greater emphasis shows how and for whom the agency provides its services. Specifically, “American” and “nation” suggest a more nationalistic tone to the mission. “Law” and “values” are also present, which I interpret as the focus of the mission values, and the type of law and values upheld are American.

## 5. Conclusion

An analysis of the evolution of the USCIS mission statement from its creation in 2003–2020 revealed that the agency goals of USCIS have evolved, mirroring a particular political focus of DHS. Mapping this evolution revealed a constant thread of national security and public safety in various degrees over the years, followed by a commitment to uphold legal immigration policy. This enforcement-centric language was most prevalent in 2003 and 2018. The mission in 2008 through 2009 focused more on workforce

development and framing the agency as part of the larger immigrant-based American identity.

The following section is my analysis of USCIS employee responses. First, I will explain findings using my initial public service motivation (PSM) coding method. Next, I will define results within each grouping of responses, including the intrinsic rewards associated with each PSM category. I will end the section with a summary of the findings, including a comparison between response groupings.

## **B. WHY DO PEOPLE SERVE WITH USCIS?**

Employees' responses suggested their understanding of who they are professionally and what role they fulfill. Employees' responses also referenced intrinsic rewards. This section first describes the results of the initial coding based on Perry's categories. Next, the passage describes four public servant roles revealed by further analysis and evidence of intrinsic reward motivation within the responses that suggested each role. Finally, this section describes changes in the prominence of employees' explanations for serving over time.

### **1. Initial Coding**

I grouped employees' responses into Perry's four categories of public service motivation: policymaking, public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice.<sup>89</sup> Table 3 shows the four types, with examples of responses in each category and overall frequency. Out of 18 responses, 12 relate to public interest during 2015–2018. After the 2018 mission statement change, public interest-centric responses were 72 out of 113. The frequency of each category appears in the Organization and Individual Fit Summary Table 6. The most prominent PSM category was public interest at 67% from 2015 to 2018 and 64% from 2018 through 2020. I interpreted these responses as public interest-focused based on Perry's PSM category statements specific to the public interest. Perry defines this range

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<sup>89</sup> Perry, "Measuring Public Service Motivation," fig. 1.

from stress of the meaning of public service to the employee (PSM 30) to the idea that everyone has some form of commitment to public service or civic duty (PSM 25 and 28).<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Perry, fig. 1.

Table 3. Public Service Motivation Individual Responses

	Public Service Motivation Themes	Count	Selected Summary Excerpt	Associated Intrinsic Rewards
2015-2018	The rewarding part is also most challenging part (Public Interest)	12	We are all working on the same goal.	answering to a noble cause; identifying with the mission goals; interaction with coworkers and refugee/asylum applicants
	The humanitarian nature of the work (Compassion)	6	I think it's not lost on any of us that there are a lot of human beings behind what we're doing.	Helping others; camaraderie/working as a family
	Self-Sacrifice	N/A		
	Policy Making	N/A		
	Total flagged responses	18		
2018-2020	It is a fulfilling and meaningful journey to serve the public; I feel honored to have the trust upon us to carry out the mission (Public Interest)	72	Making a difference together. I find myself encouraged by what we do every day. I am constantly reminded that what we do is not only important for the security of our country but also in that we make profound differences in many lives. I am honored to serve with one of the most dedicated work forces in the government.	Making a difference in people's lives; working with like-minded people
			Love of Country. Preserving the USA as a bastion of freedom and civility that the rest of the world looks up to is admirable goal and one that I try to keep in mind every day that I go to work as a public servant.	pride in work performed and connection to the greater good of the country; preserving the "American dream"
			I believe all men and women have an obligation to serve their country and give back a portion from that which we harvest through the benefits of living in what is still the greatest republic ever established. With rights come responsibilities. It has been my privilege to return the investment that my country made in me.	Patriotism; giving back to community
			This is my dream job. I want to help people while protecting America.	job satisfaction and connection to the mission
			I serve to make, "I'm from the Government, and I'm here to help," the nine most comforting words in the English language.	Doing "what's best" for the community and to public service
	To help those who are in need (Compassion)	28	I joined USCIS because I didn't want to just make a difference in people's lives, but I also wanted to work directly with these people. I wanted to be able to put a face on the names of people I helped. With RAO, I am able to join a highly qualified group of like minded individuals for whom helping others is extremely important.	helping others; working with others who also are passionate about helping others; as an immigrant to give back to the system that my family or myself participated in
	Doing the right thing, even if no one is watching (Self-Sacrifice)	4	I Serve because I Care. I am able to meet and greet US Citizens after their long path. It is a rewarding seeing their ecstatic faces as they celebrate their day and embrace their families who supported them through their journey. This is why I serve.	helping others; assisting others as a fundamental principle of morality
	To serve and protect national interests (Policy Making)	9	I strongly believe that RAO Officers play a crucial role in filtering qualified aliens who see the United States as the promised land for immigrants, while safeguarding and protecting the values of America.	protect the integrity of the immigration system; grant benefits to those truly eligible; work in the intersection of national security and humanitarian assistance
	Total flagged responses	113		

## **2. Motivations for Serving: Public Servant Role**

Further analysis of employees' responses to the open-ended questions revealed four roles. Employees generally perceive themselves as public servants, but their more nuanced descriptions of what they do suggest four public servant roles: compassionate humanitarian, public interest servant, upholder and influencer of policy, and self-sacrificing public servant. As displayed in Table 3, the prevalence of these roles varies over time, but the public interest servant and the compassionate humanitarian are consistently dominant throughout the entire date range.

### ***a. Public Interest Servant: The Rewarding Part is also the Most Challenging Part***

The excerpt “the rewarding part is also the most challenging part” from one employee's response best represents this role.<sup>91</sup> It suggests the balancing act between the rewards and costs of helping others, described by many employees. Employees' responses referenced making a difference in one's community while also facing the challenges of serving the public. Examples of this sentiment are evident here:

Work is something we care deeply about but it impacts the rest of our life.<sup>92</sup>

Step up to stay balanced and connected; so there is a sense of obligation as well: If not me, then who?<sup>93</sup>

Another theme in these responses acknowledged, “We are all working on the same goal.”<sup>94</sup> Responses suggest that employees feel that the work is rewarding and that the group is working together towards a common goal, but also express positive feelings towards the agency. Two specific examples are:

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<sup>91</sup> RAIO Ignite, “Employee Engagement Narratives,” unpublished dataset (Washington, DC: Refugee Asylum and International Operations USCIS, 2018), pt. 16.

<sup>92</sup> RAIO Ignite, pt. 11.

<sup>93</sup> USCIS, “Why I Serve Ideascapade Campaign,” pt. 2.

<sup>94</sup> RAIO Ignite, “Employee Engagement Narratives,” pt. 3.



I love the organization. I love the goals and objectives of the USCIS. I made a very thoughtful decision to transfer from the [agency omitted] to continue my Federal employment at USCIS.<sup>95</sup>

I still love it and don't plan to go anywhere.<sup>96</sup>

These strong expressions of connection with the agency are consistent with PSM 35: "to me, the phrase 'duty, honor, and country' stirs deeply felt emotions."<sup>97</sup> Employees feel both an emotional connection to the agency's mission and express that their emotional ties to the agency have produced a sense of loyalty and a conscious decision to remain.

Employees' responses suggest that satisfaction from working toward a greater good is a robust intrinsic draw for those who perceive they are filling a public interest servant role. If the greater good is associated with the agency's mission, the employees will feel valued and collaborate to accomplish the joint goal. Examples of those intrinsic rewards are as follows:

Everyone is collaborative and respectful and cares deeply about the work we do.<sup>98</sup>

So I've found that this service, like almost every other I've ever done, is bringing more to my life than I put in. It feels good to be a small part of that harmony in a more uncertain world.<sup>99</sup>

The intrinsic rewards evident in the quotes above are the self-value connected to the work performed along with the social value of team collaboration. Also, the reward of contributing to a more extensive calling brings satisfaction to the employee.

***b. Compassionate Humanitarian: To Help Those in Need***

The excerpt "to help those in need" is a concise representation of the compassionate humanitarian's role.<sup>100</sup> Those perceiving their role as compassionate humanitarian focus

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<sup>95</sup> USCIS, "Equal Employment Opportunity Diversity Climate Survey," unpublished dataset (Washington, DC: USCIS, 2018), pt. 4.

<sup>96</sup> RAIO Ignite, "Employee Engagement Narratives," pt. 6.

<sup>97</sup> Perry, "Measuring Public Service Motivation," fig. 1.

<sup>98</sup> USCIS, "EEO Diversity Climate Survey," pt. 11.

<sup>99</sup> USCIS, "Why I Serve Ideascapade Campaign," pt. 2.

<sup>100</sup> RAIO Training, "New RAIO Officer Entrance Survey," pt. 823.

on the condition and experiences of the people they serve. Employees who saw their role as public interest servants focused on “making a difference” but not on the human condition. Those who saw their role as compassionate humanitarians concentrated on “seeing to the welfare of others” and recognized “how dependent we are on one another.”<sup>101</sup> Examples of the compassionate humanitarian’s role perceptions are as follows:

I feel that it is our responsibility to care for those less fortunate...

Humanitarian work is an important way to make a difference in the lives of some of the most vulnerable members of society.<sup>102</sup>

I serve because of each person who’s life can be impacted by a fresh start, restored dignity, and a life free from those they fear.<sup>103</sup>

As evident in the above quotes, the humanitarian aspect of the USCIS mission is the driving force behind the compassionate humanitarians who view themselves as responsible for supporting others.

The intrinsic rewards of working in a collaborative environment where the employee feels valued are evident in the compassionate humanitarian’s perception. Descriptions of colleagues as “we’re like a family” and a work environment that “supports kindness and inclusion” suggest a compassionate humanitarian role. These responses emphasized interdependence and concern for the welfare of others in comments such as, “there are a lot of human beings behind what we’re doing,” and we attend to the “lives of people who fled persecution.” These responses acknowledged the link between a government employee and those they serve, emphasizing that federal public service is by the people, for the people. The reference to a familial work environment that promotes inclusion and acknowledges the direct connection of the work and its effect on a vulnerable population’s future strongly indicated PSM.

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<sup>101</sup> Perry, “Measuring Public Service Motivation,” fig. 1.

<sup>102</sup> USCIS, “Why I Serve Idealscale Campaign,” pt. 5,9.

<sup>103</sup> RAIO Training, “New RAIO Officer Entrance Survey,” pt. 432.

**c. *Upholder and Influencer of Policy***

The excerpt, “To serve and protect national interests,” through enforcing immigration policy as a member of USCIS represents this role.<sup>104</sup> USCIS is not a law enforcement agency. However, it does process all immigration-related benefit requests, from an asylum seeker application to a naturalization ceremony that transitions permanent residents to U.S. citizens. Employees protect national interests through adjudication or making a legal determination on an application. Granting someone U.S. citizenship or refugee status is a powerful tool, and some employees viewed their work as serving and protecting from a policy standpoint. Responses that indicated a primary role as an influencer of policy in joining USCIS because:

I strongly believe that RAIO Officers play a crucial role in filtering qualified aliens who see the United States as the promised land [sic] for immigrants, while safeguarding and protecting the values of America.

Because of the substantial benefits, there is incentive for some to try to take advantage of it. I became an Officer to help protect the integrity of the asylum process, so that those that deserve it can access it now and in the future.<sup>105</sup>

The intrinsic rewards associated with the role of policy influencer displayed above takes the form of policy enforcement, protecting the system from possible abuse. Here, one also sees an echo of a sense of duty as a reward like the previously mentioned public interest role. Still, this time combines with the bonus of acting as a protector of something valuable.

**d. *Doing the Right Thing, Even if no one is Watching: the Self-Sacrificer***

The excerpt “Doing the right thing, even if no one is watching” represents this role.<sup>106</sup> The self-sacrificer role contains two critical attributes: the connection to service and acknowledging the cost to self for the good of the many. Connecting to the mission is not unique by any means. Still, the complete thought of making a difference “means more to me than personal achievements” or the belief of “putting duty before self” sets the “self-

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<sup>104</sup> RAIO Training, pt. 1600.

<sup>105</sup> RAIO Training, pt. 31,1567.

<sup>106</sup> USCIS, “Why I Serve Ideascale Campaign,” pt. 5.

sacrificer” apart from its close relative of compassionate humanitarian or public interest servant.<sup>107</sup> A few pertinent examples of the self-sacrificing public servant excerpts are as follows:

To me, self-actualization is far more important than money, and I found it here at DHS. The feeling that a public servant is needed at critical times, his/her contributions are valued and appreciated, and the satisfaction of the public servant that she/he is bringing something valuable to the table is priceless.

Reverence for Life affords me my fundamental principle of morality, namely, that good consists in assisting others...<sup>108</sup>

These examples express a selfless call to duty, claiming that the monetary reward associated with the job is not the primary reason why one serves. Instead, the higher calling of contribution to a bigger cause and upholding moral principles represents the primary motivator.

The intrinsic reward associated with the self-sacrificing public servant is the attraction to giving more to the organization or the public you are serving than what you may receive in return, monetary and otherwise. The theme of self-sacrifice is an intrinsic reward in itself and is what I interpret as one of the cornerstones of public service. Not only does the self-sacrificer feel a sense of duty to give back to the community, but to pay it forward.

In conclusion, my exploratory interpretive study of PSM in USCIS employee responses through their role perceptions revealed four categories of public service: compassionate humanitarian, public interest servant, upholder and influencer of policy, and self-sacrificing public servant. Public interest servant was the predominant role throughout the responses, followed by the compassionate humanitarian. The emergence of the upholder and influencer of policy and the self-sacrificer parts occurred in the later 2018–2020 responses. Overall, a connection to ‘making a difference’ and helping others were the two strongest references of intrinsic reward value in serving with USCIS.

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<sup>107</sup> Perry, “Measuring Public Service Motivation,” fig. 1.

<sup>108</sup> USCIS, “Why I Serve Ideascale Campaign,” pt. 7.3.

## **C. EXPLORING THE FIT OF MISSION AND ROLE PERCEPTION**

In this section, I examine the congruence of the mission and employee perceptions over the two time groupings: 2015–2018 and 2018–2020. The first period demonstrated a strong fit between both the organizational and individual role themes. Likewise, the second period reflected a strong fit between the organizational storyline and the public interest servant role. However, the fit between the compassionate humanitarian and the organization wanes. In addition, the emerging self-sacrificer individual role and the organizational storyline increasingly diverge. However, the other emerging individual role of upholder and influencer of policy and the organizational storyline demonstrated a strong fit. This congruence suggests that the organizational storyline may influence individual role perception over time.

### **1. Key Change in Mission**

The mission identity of the USCIS organization evolved as discussed in the first section of this chapter. As displayed in the USCIS Mission Statement Summary Table 4, the change in the population served was not as extreme as the “how do we serve and with what outcome?” Precisely, in the pre-Trump administration time leading up to 2018, excerpts of the various mission statement iterations echo similar goal perceptions to the individual perception excerpts. I interpreted this congruence as a strong fit. The USCIS Mission Statement Summary captures my analysis of the mission statement. It displays the mission tagline and highlights I identified for both timeframes in the Organization and Individual Fit Summary Table 6.

Table 4. USCIS Mission Statement Summary<sup>109</sup>

		Conceptual Summary	Excerpts from Mission Statement
2003	Who are we?	Formerly known as INS, comprised of 15,000 Feds and Contractors	Will continue the commitment to service set forth by the INS.
	Who do we serve?	Immigration service applicants and non immigrant customers	Visitors of the United States.
	How do we serve?	With a commitment to service and preservation of national security	Modernizing the business of immigration to improve processing times and preserving national security.
	With what outcome?	Elimination of immigration backlog and improvement of services	Continue to eliminate immigration adjudications backlogs, and implement solutions for improving immigration customer services.
2008	Who are we?	Comprised of 15,000 Feds and Contractors across 250 global offices	250 Headquarters and field offices around the world comprise the USCIS.
	Who do we serve?	Petitioners	Adjudication of immigrant visa petitions; all other adjudications performed by the INS.
	How do we serve?	Not described in mission statement	N/A
	With what outcome?	Administer adjudicative functions and establish policies	USCIS is responsible for the administration of immigration and naturalization adjudication functions and establishing immigration services policies and priorities.
2009	Who are we?	Comprised of 18,000 Feds and Contractors across 250 global offices	USCIS is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States.
	Who do we serve?	Potential immigrants or customers	Our customers, our fellow employees, and the citizens of the United States of America.
	How do we serve?	United with integrity, respect, ingenuity and vigilance	We will ensure that everyone we affect will be treated with dignity and courtesy regardless of the outcome of their case.
	With what outcome?	Will support immigrants with clear information, grant benefits, promote what US citizenship means and ensure the immigration system is sound.	USCIS will secure America's promise as a nation of immigrants by providing accurate and useful information to our customers, granting immigration and citizenship benefits, promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship, and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system.
2018	Who are we?	Comprised of 19,000 Feds and Contractors across 200 global offices	We are 19,000 government employees and contractors working at more than 200 offices across the world.
	Who do we serve?	Americans and legal immigrants	We will always strive for the highest level of integrity in our dealings with the public, our fellow employees, and the citizens of the United States of America.
	How do we serve?	Administer lawful immigration while securing the homeland and honoring national values	Protecting Americans, securing the homeland, and honoring our values.
	With what outcome?	Homeland is secure and Americans are protected	Safeguarding its [USCIS] integrity and promise by efficiently and fairly adjudicating requests for immigration benefits while .
		Legal migrants immigrate to US	USCIS is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States.

<sup>109</sup> USCIS, “This Is USCIS”; USCIS, “About USCIS”; USCIS, “About Us”; USCIS, “ABOUT US”; USCIS, “Mission and Core Values | USCIS.”

## **2. Employees' Perceptions Change**

Employees' perceptions of their role also changed over time, as did the mission identity of the USCIS organization. The 'who we are' of individual roles remained centered around humanitarian work, as shown in Employee Role Perception Summary Table 5. However, the "how do we serve and with what outcome?" did evolve and affected the fit as discussed in the next section. Specifically, the outcome of service, as perceived by employees, shifted from "help or make a difference in the lives of non-US citizens" to "serve and protect national interests and help protect the integrity of the immigration process." (See Table 5.)

Table 5. Employee Role Perception Summary

Conceptual Summary	Excerpts from Individuals
The rewarding part is also most challenging part: the humanitarian nature of the work.	RAIO people are different type of person.
People who fled persecution (asylum seekers and refugees).	The caliber of the staff at RAIO is a notch above. We have some friggin' smart people.
The rewarding part is also most challenging part; working together for the same goal.	I think it's not lost on any of us that there are a lot of human beings behind what we're doing.
Help or make a difference in the lives of non US citizens.	Everyone is collaborative and respectful and cares deeply about the work we do.
	I love the organization. I love the goals and objectives of the USCIS.
	I still love it and don't plan to go anywhere.
We are serving to help while also protecting America, driven by humanitarian causes.	I fully believe in the mission and found the work very engaging.
	I value public service and would like to support those seeking asylum while upholding the mission of USCIS.
	I believe in the mission of this agency and I think that our mission is a noble one. I am very proud to work for USCIS.
	I became an officer because I want to help those who were in need.
	I believe in the mission of providing humanitarian benefits and immigration services with quality and integrity.
	I became a RAIO officer because I strongly believe in our goal of protecting those who need and deserve our country's protection.
	I serve because I want to be a part of such a unique, fast-paced and service-minded environment.
	I love my country and the DHS mission.
Immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and Americans.	Helping the general public, my fellow coworkers and the agency's mission.
	I feel that it is our responsibility to care for those less fortunate as well as work to build up and strengthen the young leaders of our nation.
	I became a RAIO officer to work directly with people in need.
Doing the right thing, even if no one is watching.	I wanted my work to be in service and to be able to feel everyday that I helped people and/or did some good.
	Humanitarian work is an important way to make a difference in the lives of some of the most vulnerable members of society.
To serve and protect national interests and help protect the integrity of the immigration process.	To help the government.
	The mission: to protect and serve refugees while preserving the integrity of the immigration process.
	Making a Difference with a Public Trust. That responsibility made me appreciate the oath of office that I took upon entering federal service.
	I strongly believe that RAIO Officers play a crucial role in filtering qualified aliens who see the United States as the promised land for immigrants, while safeguarding and protecting the values of America.
	I serve because of each person who's life can be impacted by a fresh start, restored dignity, and a life free from those they fear.
	To ensure that those who are persecuted for their immutable characteristics are protected from victimization.
	As an immigrant I am eager to help people to live better lives.



### **3. Employees' Perceptions Change, but so Does the Mission**

In the first grouping, before the election of Donald Trump, only two of the storylines appeared. Public interest occurred in 67% of the employee responses and compassion in 33% of responses. A strong fit emerges in the Organization and Individual Fit Summary Table 6 between organizational storyline and individual perception.

Table 6. Organization and Individual Fit Summary

	Agency Narrative Highlights	Narrative Response Themes	Prominence	Individual Narrative Excerpts	Fit?
<b>2003-2018</b> <b>Preserving America's promise as a nation of immigrants</b>	Agency Mission Tagline				
	We are a nation of immigrants	We are all working on the same goal (public interest)	57%	The rewarding part is also most challenging part	Strong Fit
	We promote respect, dignity and courtesy	The humanitarian nature of the work (compassion)	45%	I think it's not just on any of us that there are a lot of human beings behind what we're doing	Strong Fit
	We support immigrant integration into American culture	Self-Sacrifice	N/A		
	We minimize threats to public safety	Policy Making	N/A		
	We promote national security	Total:	100%		
<b>2018-2020</b> <b>Protecting Americans and securing the homeland through lawful immigration</b>					
	We safeguard the integrity and promise of immigration benefits	It is a fulfilling and meaningful journey to serve the public; I feel honored to have the trust upon us to carry out the mission (Public Interest)	64%	Making a difference together. I find myself encouraged by what we do every day. I am constantly reminded that what we do is not only important for the security of our country but also in that we make profound differences in many lives. I am honored to serve with one of the most dedicated work forces in the government.	Strong Fit
				I joined USCIS because I didn't want to just make a difference in people's lives, but I also wanted to work directly with these people.	
	We promote integrity, respect, innovation, and vigilance	To help those who are in need (Compassion)	25%	I wanted to be able to put a face on the names of people I helped. With RAIO, I am able to join a highly qualified group of like minded individuals for whom helping others is extremely important.	Neutral
	We honor our values	Doing the right thing, even if no one is watching (Self-Sacrifice)	3%	I serve because I Care. I am able to meet and greet US Citizens after their long path. It is a rewarding seeing their ecstatic faces as they celebrate their day and embrace their families who supported them through their journey. This is why I serve.	No Fit
	We are vigilant with the nation's security	To serve and protect national interests (Policy Making)	8%	I strongly believe that RAIO Officers play a crucial role in filtering qualified aliens who see the United States as the promised land for immigrants, while safeguarding and protecting the values of America.	Strong Fit
		Total:	100%		

However, in the second period, two additional storylines emerged, self-sacrifice and policymaking. In this grouping, public interest continued to dominate the individual perception at 64%, and compassion declined to 25%, while the presence of policymaking covered 8% and self-sacrifice was at 3%. Public interest declined from 67% in the first grouping to 64% (3% difference), and compassion declined from 33% in the first grouping to 25% (8% declination). This 11% gap was filled in the second grouping predominantly by policymaking with a tiny sliver going towards self-sacrifice. The array of policy changes and external factors occurring between 2018 through 2020 could have influenced the emergence of policymaking, which has a strong fit. Similarly, the emergence of self-sacrifice in employee responses has no fit with the 2018 mission statement and could be perceived as a response as an extreme connection to a humanitarian cause in the face of a national security-drive mission statement.

In summary, a strong fit tied the organizational and individual storylines together in the first grouping. A strong fit linked public interest and the new policymaking values with the second period's organizational mission values. However, the fit between the value of compassion of the employees and the organization's values during this period declined.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

The analysis of USCIS employee responses began with a categorization using Perry's PSM prompts. Further analysis of employees' answers to the open-ended questions revealed four roles. Employees generally perceive themselves as public servants, but their more nuanced descriptions of what they do suggest four public servant roles: compassionate humanitarian, public interest servant, upholder and influencer of policy, and self-sacrificing public servant. The belief in the mission was the most common thread throughout the flagged excerpts in both time groupings. I interpreted a strong fit between both of the organizational and individual storyline themes in the first grouping. There is a strong fit between the public interest and new policymaking individual values and the organizational values in the second period. The next chapter will explore the implications of this chapter's analysis and a call for future research, and an overall summary of this thesis's research.

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## **V. IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

The previous chapter detailed my exploratory study on USCIS organizational identity and its employees' perspective on their roles as public service members. It documented a lack of congruency between the organization's presentation of its mission and individual employees' role perceptions. So why does this matter? A lack of congruency between organizational mission and an individual's understanding of their mission as an employee can lead to a couple of different national security issues. An employee performing in an ever-changing environment requires comprehensive training to remain aligned with organizational values and consistent messaging of the *why* behind those changes and how it relates to the agency's larger mission and purpose. Without training and communication, this may leave the employee feeling disenfranchised and display inconsistency in the work product or leave.

This chapter begins with a situational awareness exercise using the Cynefin framework and the USCIS mission statement's various iterations. I interpreted where to place the mission statement language in the Cynefin domain based on my understanding of USCIS values. I chose the Cynefin framework due to the suggested actions associated in each domain quadrant of how to react to a situation. Using the Cynefin framework to capture the state of organizational value flux helped create a physical representation of the complex case. Furthermore, using the Cynefin framework to guide organizational value fit assessments would help identify value misalignments. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for future research and immediate action recommendations for USCIS.

### **A. IMPLICATIONS: A COMPLEX SITUATION**

I draw upon the findings explained in the previous chapter as a starting point for the sense-making process. I wanted to explore what congruence or "fit" looks like in the Cynefin framework domain. It seemed appropriate to use the Cynefin framework for further analysis due to the narrative study's interpretive nature. Before this research project, I was aware of anonymous employee feedback collection, strategic planning revolving around FEVS scores, and policy-driven changes in the USCIS agency mission. However,

any existing research I found regarding the story of USCIS was conducted under entrained patterns of known government function, rather than exploring the unknown. By considering “the dynamics of situations, decisions, perspectives, conflicts and changes” of the narratives analyzed, I strive to make sense of where the USCIS narrative resided on the Cynefin domain before the significant mission change in 2018.<sup>110</sup>

This section outlines the nature of the Cynefin domain connection for each quadrant, mapping both the USCIS narrative and employee narrative summary within the Cynefin domains. This mapping further expands upon the fit findings in the previous section. I interpret a strong, neutral, or weak fit as a strong indicator of which domain the two narratives occupy.

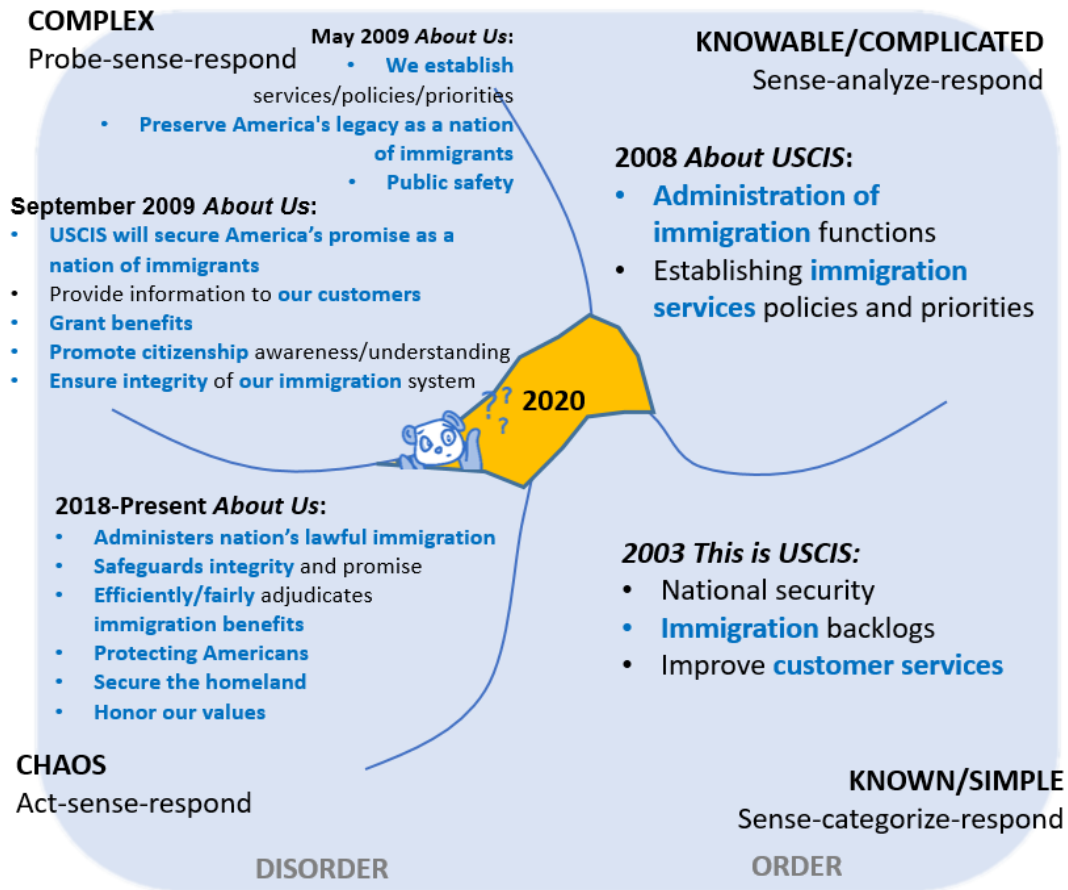
### **1. Organizational Presentation of Mission: Crossing into the Unknown**

The USCIS mission statement experienced five iterations at the time of this thesis publication, ranging from the original 2003 creation statement to the 2018 change. My perception of the mission changes, for both when and why they occurred, led to creating Figure 5 Mission Highlights in the Cynefin Domains. Referring back to the Social and Political Chronology Figure 1 in the analysis chapter as a quick reference helps visualize significant political and social events, including unexpected global occurrences and policy changes that directly affect USCIS’s mission and goals. As outlined in Figure 4, I found that the language used to frame the USCIS mission in conjunction with world events at the time of the change established a connection to one of the four Cynefin domains.

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<sup>110</sup> Kurtz and Snowden, “The New Dynamics of Strategy,” 468.

Figure 5. Mission Highlights in the Cynefin Domains



Essential vocabulary from each mission statement is in blue text in Figure 4. I decided where to place the mission statement excerpts within the Cynefin domains on the political and social context that informed the creation or alteration of the mission statement in conjunction with Snowden's domain definitions.

The original USCIS mission statement from 2003 resides in the knowable domain of order due to a direct and straightforward focus on national security and customer service. While USCIS was a new agency as part of the DHS's creation, it is a continuation of an established organization previously known as Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). It thus comes with a set of standard operating procedures. Although it may take a bit of process reengineering to align as a new agency, the core of the work is well

established and thus follows the sense-categorize-respond action pattern for this most stable of the Cynefin domains.<sup>111</sup>

The two subsequent iterations of the mission reside in the known domain of order. I interpret the use of “administer” and “establish” policy as knowable goals with a robust and centralized sense of situational awareness. By 2008, USCIS is an established agency and works to maintain the status quo as the presidential administration shifts from George W. Bush Jr to Barack Obama. There is a simplification to the mission, but the words used to describe its goals align more with scenario planning and sense-analyze-respond chain of actions associated with this Cynefin domain.<sup>112</sup>

Next, we enter the complex domain with a substantial shift in organizational storytelling to “America’s Promise as an Immigration Nation” in September 2009, approximately seven months after Barack Obama takes office. Here the relationship becomes complex due to the mission statement’s conflicting values: 1) promoting the country as open to all immigrants while b) maintaining the previous national security goals and administering legal policy restrictions. The political and social context of the 2009 change and the events that follow correlate the closest with this Cynefin domain’s probe-sense-respond action pattern. The agency begins to see cause and effect patterns not repeating as previously experienced, and the agency struggles to create complex adaptive systems as the demand for immigration benefits skyrockets.<sup>113</sup>

Over the next several years, USCIS enters a new chapter of workload demand. The number of people requesting immigration benefits and relief on the border increased around 2008 and continued through 2018. I propose that the 2018 mission statement change is a situational awareness reaction to the agency’s state of chaos in the domain of disorder. The 2018 statement of “Protecting Americans and Securing the Homeland” is a mission that starkly contrasts with the previous declaration of preserving “America’s Promise as an Immigration Nation.” This newest iteration in the mission was designed to address the

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<sup>111</sup> Kurtz and Snowden, 468.

<sup>112</sup> Kurtz and Snowden, 468.

<sup>113</sup> Kurtz and Snowden, 468.



social crisis of record numbers of people seeking asylum at the border and refugee status worldwide. The agency's political tone shifts toward nationalism under the Trump administration (see Social and Political Chronology Figure 1). Thus, the language change follows the act-sense-respond sequence of events associated with the chaotic Cynefin domain, with situation stability as the agency's immediate goals.<sup>114</sup>

Finally, I include 2020 in the Cynefin framework due to the array of unexpected global events that occurred, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, which practically halted any immigration movement to the United States (see Social and Political Chronology, Figure 1). Politically essential events were also occurring, particularly the U.S. presidential election. Thus, by Cynefin standards, the year 2020 was in a state of pure disorder.<sup>115</sup>

I used the Cynefin framework to make sense of the evolution of the USCIS organizational story through situational awareness of the political and social environment in which each iteration took place. This was an exploratory attempt to extrapolate implications of changes in organizational storytelling via the Cynefin framework. It also captures how an organization tells its story and how it may affect the political and social environment in which its employees carry out that mission. As discussed in the literature review, changes in policy and organizational goals may cause misalignment with its employees if the two sets of values are different. My interpretation of USCIS organizational values as displayed in the Cynefin framework suggests that the values included in the mission statement in 2018 were misaligned with the values expressed by its employees during the same time. A misfit in values may result in the employee leaving the organization if they feel that their values no longer align with the organization, causing an increase in attrition. In the next section, I will briefly cover a few examples of situational awareness expressed in individual responses.

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<sup>114</sup> Kurtz and Snowden, 468–69.

<sup>115</sup> Kurtz and Snowden, 469.

## **2. Individuals Acknowledge the Complex Situation**

Apart from PSM individual response analysis, I also noted comments that acknowledged the shift in mission in 2018. While many employees expressed that they were situationally aware of what was occurring, three excerpts stood out in referencing the change in the storyline:

My program went from being a political [sic] to attacked near constantly. Its exhausting to go to work in that environment.

I am hopeful that I can see a change in the near future. I continue hearing stories from employees that continue to say how great USCIS used to be and how much it has changed (negatively). I am disappointed to hear that because USCIS can do better.

Anti-immigrant and racist policies being applied to our adjudications makes immigrant and minority employees feel unwelcome in the organization.<sup>116</sup>

The above excerpts raise concern for the shift in mission goals for USCIS. Accompanying the sentiments expressed above was also a less prominent but valid concern of a lack of support for the Trump administration during the issuance of the EEO Diversity Climate Survey in 2018:

Unfortunately, there are lots of employees in the workforce, starting with leadership, that don't value the mission in the sense of respecting our agency's mission, the President's focus, and that of the Constitution. There is a lot of favoritism over one party and one set of ideals and a lot of disrespect and disregard for those who support the mission and the President.<sup>117</sup>

It is no news that a government agency, particularly one whose primary focus is immigration, may suffer from political bias swing when setting its agency mission. However, according to the first set of excerpts, USCIS has lost its positive work environment due to policy changes. However, in the fourth excerpt, the respondent raises concern that the current USCIS workforce does not support the agency mission. The collection of these narratives is relevant because 2018 marked the second year of the Trump

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<sup>116</sup> USCIS, "EEO Diversity Climate Survey," pt. 108,147,179.

<sup>117</sup> USCIS, pt. 185.

administration and aligns with the change in mission statement by USCIS Director L. Francis Cissna.

It is also important to point out that in the context of the USCIS and RAO missions, any benefit received by non-US citizens is an immigration benefit, including granting asylum or refugee status. Never in the USCIS mission statement does the agency describe its mission as “humanitarian benefits,” which reads like more of a tagline for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). However, since the business of USCIS is moving people through a citizen status process, it is logical that employees who like helping others would be attracted to the work. Thus, the intrinsic reward associated with the compassionate humanitarians is that human element necessary to understand the context of the work: who are the people requesting benefits, where are they from, what is the social context, is the criteria baseline met to grant or deny benefit applications. All of the USCIS work involves constant communication with the applicant and possibly their attorney, family members who may also benefit from any grant received, and many times an interpreter for both the applicant and the employee to communicate clearly. The human element in immigration work is strong enough to produce a compassionate humanitarian theme.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

My research’s key takeaway is the neutrality of fit or no fit between PSM and the USCIS mission statement in 2018, which suggests that the majority of employees at that time possessed a different set of values than what the organization was promoting. In combination with recent PSM studies and value congruence, this finding suggests that misalignment may contribute to USCIS’s attrition problems. The critical implication is that employees may leave the organization due to a misalignment in values or remain in the organization to carry out their own set of personal values rather than that of the organization. This suggests the potential for value clarification interventions focused on adjusting the organizational alignment through workforce engagement. This also calls for further research to identify, elaborate, and test retention levels following 2020, including conducting post-exit survey interviews, if possible, with previously surveyed employees.

In addition, conducting stay interviews with the current workforce to gauge the contemporary fit of employee values with the current organization's values would provide valuable situational awareness for the organization and provide possible indicators on how to increase the fit of the two sets of values. This section will cover further research recommendations and a suggested action plan to strengthen fit with its current workforce.

### **1. Call for Future Research**

I recommend future research to identify, elaborate, and test retention levels following 2020, including conducting post-exit survey interviews, if possible, with previously surveyed employees. A weakness in my research was the lack of a measurement baseline for congruence to begin the analysis. At what point is ideal for capturing the highest value alignment or the largest misalignment between organizational value and employees' perception of those values? Surveying the same set of employees over time, particularly during a change in political administration, would help map the evolution of the fit of employee values with the organizational story, much like I did with the set of mission statements. The researcher will contribute to the continued need to map PSM with the social context dynamics in which it exists. Thus, my employee-based research implications are essential from a human resource perspective because the study provides insight into the motivations employees are looking for in the agency mission. Human capital strategists could use this information to their advantage to frame recruitment and retention efforts. This connects back to the background of USCIS and the high risk of human capital as defined in the introduction chapter. Additionally, an individual's perception of value is not static, and external factors are influential, as evident in the research.

The research explored the political and social contexts during the various changes in the USCIS mission. Still, I did not cover social media rhetoric to describe USCIS, including its leadership, in 2015–2020. Existing research on PSM was mostly conducted before the widespread use of social media. It would be beneficial to analyze what values are promoted by the organization through official social media channels with the values expressed by organizational leadership and its employees. For example, many times, policy

changes were announced via social media by the Trump administration during 2015–2020 timeframe of my research, but I did not investigate social media to maintain this research project’s scope. It would also tell what employees genuinely value through social media analysis of responses to policy changes posted in social media by both employees and the public. The implications of public reaction to a policy or organizational value changes could affect employee PSM levels. Thus, research on organizational storytelling and social media’s influence on employee PSM could further explain PSM and organizational value dynamics.

## **2. Recommendations for the Agency**

As described in the analysis, the changes in mission have been tumultuous in recent years for USCIS. Political and social events have led to inconsistent purpose messaging, intense politicization of USCIS’s purpose, and most recently the threat of furloughing 75% of its workforce. An extreme drop in immigration benefit applications due to the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the cause for furlough, and continued to plague the world at the time of this thesis publication. Despite these challenges, this section calls for action by USCIS and the RAIO directorate to use this thesis’s findings to enhance value fit between organization and employees.

### ***a. Consistent Communication and Engagement with the Workforce***

Apart from a few senior management emails, there was little engagement with the workforce during the last USCIS mission statement alteration. I became a USCIS employee in March 2017 and did not recall a single training or work session to explain why the mission had changed. The media usually revealed policy change announcements before internal messaging and training were in production. Thus, I recommend that to realign USCIS’s mission purpose with individual employee perceptions of their purpose, consistent messaging is crucial for employee engagement. Not passive communication in the form of email announcements or virtual policy training. Small group explanations of value changes where employees may ask clarifying questions may be a good start to promoting a unified mission.

Additionally, conducting stay interviews with the current workforce to gauge the contemporary fit of employee values with the current organization's values would provide valuable situational awareness for the organization and provide possible indicators on how to increase the fit of the two sets of values.

In summary, across all narrative sets analyzed, the stark contrast between respondent statements regarding the USCIS work environment and dedication to the mission is particularly noteworthy. It demonstrates the two different sets of mission values from the employee perspective. My research further validates that dramatic policy changes lead to decreased PSM levels and a misalignment between organizational values and employee values. This is key in understanding the root causes of attrition and how an organization can better socialize its values with its employees, or recruit employees more aligned with its existing values.

Although this study does not capture the length of service with USCIS at the time of the narrative surveys, it may be worthwhile in future research efforts on public service motivation to map length of service with concern for mission goals and work environment. For example, an employee who recently began with USCIS at the time of the mission statement will have a different perspective than an employee who served the agency for several years. Length of service with the public service versus private service would also be relevant to how frequent a changing work environment sentiment is at a particular agency. Further research in a post-Trump administration environment would be an exciting continuation of congruence research between organizational storytelling and individual employee perception, including further situational awareness analysis using the Cynefin framework.

I learned on this journey how to properly categorize and analyze the anecdotal behavior I have observed over the past few years. Specifically, how to qualify why my colleagues chose to serve with USCIS, and why some have continued their service through various organizational change in mission and values. I knew that many, including myself, considered leaving the agency after the mission statement change. However, I did not understand what that questioning of 'why am I here?' is rooted in public service motivation theory. Furthermore, I have a better understanding of how to apply the Cynefin framework

as a sense-making exercise that I intend to use for current culture situational awareness initiatives underway at RAIO. The research outlined in this thesis has opened my eyes to the evidence that employees at USCIS may hold values that differ greatly from the organization's values. Also, by frequently changing its values, USCIS has recruited employees who identify with different chapters, if you will, of the organizational value book. One could extrapolate that misalignment of values may be part of the root cause of attrition issues. Further research on how to strengthen organizational value connection with its employees would benefit the agency.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

This thesis set out to document how the USCIS organizational identity as described in its mission statement evolved coupled with USCIS employees' perceptions of their purpose as categorized by public service motivation theory. As described in the methods chapter, the study of USCIS employees' perceptions of their professional role consisted of separating various employee response excerpts into two groups based chronologically on the pre and post 2018 USCIS mission statement change. Dividing the responses into two smaller groups allowed me to conduct a deeper interpretive analysis using Perry's PSM subcategories as a starting point for mapping response themes. The result was four categories: compassionate humanitarian, public interest servant, upholder and influencer of policy, and self-sacrificing public servant. Employee narrative responses also included intrinsic rewards, which the analysis associates with each of the four explanations.

As discussed in the analysis chapter, it was relevant to first capture the organization's identity before proceeding with an interpretive analysis of employee individual professional identities rooted in PSM theory. The study of both organizational and employee identity related to mission and goals revealed noteworthy trends in common vocabulary use and dedication to "making a difference" while "helping others," even if the framing of those two goals changed over time by both parties. My exploratory interpretive study of PSM in USCIS employee responses through their role perceptions revealed four categories of public service: compassionate humanitarian, public interest servant, upholder and influencer of policy, and self-sacrificing public servant. Public interest servant was the

predominant role throughout the responses, followed by the compassionate humanitarian. The emergence of the upholder and influencer of policy and the self-sacrificer roles occurred in the later 2018–2020 responses. Overall, a connection to ‘making a difference’ and helping others were the two strongest references of intrinsic reward value in serving with USCIS.

The analysis revealed a constant thread of national security and public safety in various degrees over the years, followed by a commitment to uphold legal immigration policy. This enforcement-centric language was most prevalent in 2003 and 2018. The mission in 2008 through 2009 focused more on workforce development and framing the agency as part of the larger immigrant-based American identity. At the time of this thesis publication, the USCIS mission had not changed since 2018. I created two word clouds to capture popular vocabulary used in the two groupings of mission statements. The word clouds revealed popular terminology used for framing the mission during each mission statement grouping. The phrasing depicted in the word cloud suggests evolution from describing what USCIS does to how and for whom the agency provides its services.

There is a strong fit between the organizational and individual storyline themes in the first grouping. There is a strong fit between the public interest and new policymaking individual storylines themes and the organizational storyline in the second period. However, the fit between the compassionate individual storyline and the organizational storyline has declined. There is no fit between the new self-sacrifice individual storyline and the organizational storyline theme in this period.

The implications and recommendations chapter discussed my interpretive study’s implications, building on the previous chapter. I embarked on a deeper exploratory study using the Cynefin framework to provide situational awareness of the two narratives within the Cynefin sense-making domains. The Cynefin domains give a visual framework to understand the fit between organizational value and individual perception of their value.

I recommend that USCIS begin to adapt sense-making frameworks like the Cynefin to engage its workforce in identifying misalignments between employee and organizational values. Conducting small exercises in each USCIS directorate with staff on what they



believe to be the values of USCIS by placing them in the Cynefin domains will produce invaluable feedback for the organization to reassess where further employee engagement is needed. An exercise using the Cynefin framework may also reveal how USCIS should react to its attrition problem by following the action sequence associated with the Cynefin domain, where employee values may misalign with current USCIS values.

Although this thesis did not explore the relationship between the two narratives, I highly recommend the next step in investigative research to explore the relationship between organizational storytelling and employee perceptions of their role in the organization's story. Specifically, performing an in-depth analysis of how changes in an organization's values can either strengthen or disrupt the employee's sense of purpose and belonging to those values. Additionally, research in social media values and employees' values could also shed light on the more intricate PSM dynamics and organizational storytelling, including the public's responses to policy changes. This is a recommended call for action to USCIS as an opportunity to strengthen its workforce with more transparent and effective communication to build a shared commitment to organizational values and promote employees' perception of their role in the larger organizational story.

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## APPENDIX. PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION ITEMS BY SUBSCALE AND COLOR CODING<sup>118</sup>

### Attraction to Policy Making: BLUE

PSM 15 I **respect public officials** who can **turn a good idea into law**.

PSM 22 **Ethical behavior of public officials** is as **important as competence**.

### Commitment to Public Interest: YELLOW (Social Justice & Civic Duty)

PSM 23 I **unselfishly contribute** to **my community**.

PSM 30 **Meaningful public service** is very **important to me**.

PSM 34 I would prefer **seeing public officials do what is best** for the **whole community** even if it **harmed my interests**.

PSM 37 An **official's obligation to the public** should always **come before loyalty to superiors**.

PSM 39 I **consider public service my civic duty**.

PSM 18 I **believe** that there are **many public causes worth championing**.

PSM 32 If **any group does not share** in the **prosperity of our society**, then **we are all worse off**.

PSM 33 I am **willing to use every ounce of my energy** to **make the world a more just place**.

PSM 38 I am **not afraid to go to bat for the rights of others** even if it **means I will be ridiculed**.

PSM 14 When **public officials take an oath of office**, I **believe** they **accept obligations not expected of other citizens**.

PSM 21 I am **willing to go great lengths** to **fulfill my obligations** to **my country**.

PSM 25 **Public service** is one of the **highest forms of citizenship**.

PSM 28 I **believe everyone** has a **moral commitment to civic affairs** no matter how busy they are.

PSM 29 I have **an obligation to look after those less well off**.

PSM 35 To me, the phrase **"duty, honor, and country"** **stirs deeply felt emotions**.

PSM 36 It is **my responsibility** to help **solve problems** arising from **interdependencies among people**.

### Compassion: GREEN

PSM 3 Most **social programs are too vital** to do without.

PSM 4 It is **difficult for me to contain my feelings** when I **see people in distress**.

PSM 8 To me, **patriotism** includes **seeing to the welfare of others**.

PSM 13 I am often reminded by daily events about **how dependent we are on one another**.

### Self-Sacrifice: PINK

PSM 1 **Making a difference in society** means **more to me than personal achievements**.

PSM 5 I believe in **putting duty before self**.

PSM 9 Much of what I do is **for a cause bigger than myself**.

PSM 12 **Serving citizens** would **give me a good feeling** even if **no one paid me** for it.

PSM 17 I **feel people should give back to society** more than they get from it.

PSM 19 I am one of those **rare people who would risk personal loss to help someone else**.

PSM 26 I am **prepared to make enormous sacrifices** for the **good of society**.

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<sup>118</sup> Perry, "Measuring Public Service Motivation," 10–11.

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