

# NDC Culture

[Synthetics](#)<sup>1)</sup> make up the primary population of the [New Dusk Conclave](#) and its culture has been heavily influenced by this fact. Much of the Conclave's society revolves around the [Cadre](#), a social structure built around similar occupations. Members of various Cadres that share a common purpose can come together to form [Guilds](#). And, lastly, the concept of [Contribution](#) has a powerful impact on the interpersonal and hierarchical structure of the NDC as a whole.

## Social Principles

NDC social policy is driven by a few simple ideals.

### Everyone Contributes

As a growing, frontier-like society full of purpose-made citizens, all citizens are expected to meaningfully work towards the faction's future. This is instilled in new citizens as part of their sign-in ceremony and, especially, the NDC's clones during their initial training period.

The frontier spirit has morphed and changed as the population has grown until it has become a deep-rooted principle of how NDC society operates. The faction's social structures and reputation standings have become heavily based around the notion of contribution. Friendly rivalries, snide remarks, and the professional relationships tend to be centered around the concept.

While the government may provide for those who do not work, the citizens have little patience for such layabouts.

This principle is most deeply held by the NDC's Synth population, who have an sociological system devoted to the concept of [Contribution](#). As Synths slowly become the majority in the NDC, the concept of Contribution has begun to spread.

### A roof for every citizen, a meal for every stomach

With the exception of the frontier and developing colonies, the NDC provides basic housing, healthcare, and meals for all of its populace. This policy means that it is rare to see someone who is actually homeless within the NDC's cities.

These basic accommodations are exactly that - basic. They include a place to sleep, ways to stay clean, access to the NDC's internet, and simple meals. They are neither lavish nor destitute, and have a look and feel somewhere between a hotel room and a single-room crew quarters.

These accommodations improve based on an individual's contributions to society. Residences become larger, gain additional rooms, meal quality improves, and so forth, in a manner similar to becoming an

officer in the military. In general, this is based on your seniority and position within a given cadre. A military officer and a construction foreman would progress in society in similar ways, with similar rewards for their efforts.

If they wish, citizens have the option to purchase their own home, meals, etc outside of the government provided housing.

## You are defined by what you do, not where you came from

Every citizen in the NDC is expected to contribute to society. For most, this means working within a given trade or job, volunteering, and just generally being an asset. All roles are viewed as equally important and worthwhile. An individual is first viewed, not as a clone or natural, a girl or boy, young or old, but as a baker, an engineer, a scientist, and so on.

Social pressure, encouragement, a stable income, and other benefits all contribute to an individual's desire to work, despite their essential needs being taken care of.

The government has little involvement in *enforcing* this principle, except when it contributes to [crime](#). As such, it is largely the citizens who set these expectations for themselves and the others around them.

Those who don't work are considered [vagabonds](#) and are, generally, looked down upon.

While this principle generally holds true, friction between Naturals, those individuals who are born in a normal fashion without some intended purpose, and Synthetics, those individuals who are designed and created to fulfill a given role, still exists. Some Synthetics view Naturals as inefficient at best or offensive at worst, based largely around the Natural's ability to perform their assigned tasks. Excellence is the Synthetics' first interest and some have less patience for a lack of it than others.

## Social Organization

Citizens in the NDC are primarily divided in two ways. The first is the Cadre, which orients around purpose, and the second is the Cohort, which orients around the group that you were born with. For Synths, this is a welcome support structure that acts as a very extended family.

For non-Synths, or Naturals, who are not born into a Cadre or Cohort, it is easy to feel like an outsider despite the NDC's 'open arms' policies. Typically referred to as Natural-Borns, or Naturals for short, these individuals have to strive to prove their place in a society made of people purpose-created to be excellent at their jobs.

The exploration and pursuit of purpose and identity are major factors in the NDC's culture. For Synthetics who are born into a purpose, but lack an identity, finding their own place in a sea of others like them can be overwhelming. For Naturals, who possess an identity, but must justify their purpose, feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, and even superiority can be common.

For those who find the structure of Cadres and Guilds to be comforting, the NDC can be a very supportive place for members of all species.

## Cadres

Synthetics, be they AI or organic, are typically born into, and consider themselves part of, one of the NDC's six [Cadres](#). Non-synthetics typically enter a Cadre by way of an apprenticeship program or sponsorship. Individuals not belonging to a Cadre may be seen as untrustworthy or non-contributors, especially when it comes to finding employment.

Cadres are part family, part civil structure, and part trade guild. Cadres are the broadest organization in the Cadre structure, and represent a broad professional field. Each cadre is subdivided into clans, which represent specific professions, and further into branches, which are local elements of a Clan.

The relationships between cadre members are generally familial, and it is common for people of the same cadre to refer to each other as brother, sister, or some other traditional family term based on age and closeness. Master and apprentice terms are also frequently used when referring to someone who has more or less practical job experience.

## Guilds

Guilds are social organizations, typically organized around multi-cadre work efforts. One example would be the [Mining Guild](#), which is both corporation and guild. It employs a variety of individuals from various cadres in order to do conduct its operations.

Guilds can be formed around large construction efforts, corporate pursuits, or private military organizations. They typically have well defined leadership hierarchies, clear goals, and membership requirements.

A Guild, much like a Clan, can have a large amount of political influence.

## Cohorts

Separate from Cadres, a cohort is typically a group of Synthetics born at the same time, in the same facility. These early bonds tend to be the first friendships and social connections a Synthetic has formed and often last a lifetime. The closest real-world example to a cohort would be tight, lifelong social groups, such as a school's 'Class of..' or a therapy group.

Cohorts don't always remain physically near each other. Often sent in various directions, as need demands, they instead stay in touch via the NDC's various communication media. Many cohorts will schedule annual gatherings in a fashion similar to a class or family reunion.

Refugees and naturalized citizens have begun to adopt this social structure, organizing themselves into groups based on when they joined the New Dusk Conclave. These cohorts are considered just as legitimate as those created by clones, though they are not always as close.

## Contribution

Contribution is an evolution of the simple competitive games and rankings that are introduced during the Synthetic's creation process. What started as a simple way of measuring an individual's contribution to the group has grown into a significant underpinning of Synthetic society.

Similar in most ways to the concept of 🤖 **Face**, Contribution is a combination of pride, dignity, honor, and prestige. To earn Contribution is to be recognized by your peers for your particular merits and deeds. To lose Contribution is to be shamed or viewed as less necessary by the group. Contribution, like Face, can be granted, lost, fought for, and gained as recognition.

It is, at its core, the measure by which an individual's peers view their worth. It is wholly a sociological construct and has no formal tracking method (although many *informal* 'scoreboards' do exist). When an individual is moving from one area to another, or changing social groups, a peer or senior in their current group will often handle introductions and 'transfer' some degree of understanding in regards to the individual's Contribution.

Politeness is typically a key element of societies that have Face as a consideration. This is less true for Synthetics. While politeness is certainly appreciated, Synthetics tend to expect professionalism in a work setting and are much more relaxed when not working. It takes a considerable amount of rude or improper behavior to lose Contribution in the eyes of others, but when it does happen it is a very significant hit.

Most 'senior' members of a Guild or Cadre have earned sufficient Contribution to be viewed as worthy of the position by their peers. These senior members can lose their positions by losing Contribution, typically by misusing their authority. At that point, the individual moves down in the ranks and someone else takes their place. Changes of leadership, such as those that take place in a Guild or Cadre, are typically managed by a democratic vote that leans heavily on the Contribution of those involved.

An individual who has lost Contribution is, typically, not forever shunned. Synthetics are always happy to see someone return to being a contributing member of society. Only a truly noteworthy loss of Contribution can leave an individual permanently destitute within the eyes of others.

Attempts to formally track Contribution or boast about one's own Contribution are a guaranteed way to lose Contribution. Seniors are quick to point out that attempts to gamify the system, rather than do the right thing, only serve to defeat the entire point of pursuing excellence for its own sake.

## Social Challenges

Refugees and naturalized citizens find the NDC to be generally welcoming, but there are challenges involved in joining a pre-existing 'family'. As a collective of purpose-born individuals with free will, the NDC's Synthetic population sometimes find it challenging to understand people who don't know where they fit in.

It can be difficult for non-Synthetics to find work in many fields. An employer might be viewed as taking a risk by hiring an 'unknown quantity', compared to the 'sure thing' of a Synthetic whose skill set is

guaranteed to make them perform well in that role.

In short, while the New Dusk Conclave welcomes refugees and provides them with all the benefits of their other citizens, it does not mean that life as a refugee is guaranteed to be easy.

## Anti-Natural Sentiment

For the NDC's majority Synthetic population, being a Natural is an undesirable quality. For most, this manifests itself in something akin to pity or mild dislike. Naturals do not typically take to their jobs as easily as Synthetics, can not usually work for as long, and generally contribute 'less'.

For some, Natural is a derogatory term, used with the intent of casting the natural born as 'lesser' and 'other'. This is not supported by government policy or position, but is still a prevalent issue.

One area of uncertainty are those individuals born to organic Synth parents, such as clones. While born naturally, they share all the physical and mental traits that would identify them as a clone, with the exception of how they were created. For the child and society both, navigating the NDC's dichotomy of Natural or not-Natural can be difficult.

## Body Augmentation

Cybernetics and other forms of large-scale body augmentation are viewed in a pragmatic fashion. As the standard clone or Operator body is guaranteed to perform well, most Synthetics are content with how their bodies operate. If someone's body is injured to the point that cybernetics are necessary, then of course the citizen will do what needs to be done to get back to work.

The idea of *optional* augmentations is one that most Synthetics find unappealing. Long recovery times, non-standard uniform/equipment requirements, and other issues all contribute to the population's belief that unnecessary augmentation should be avoided. Additionally, the NDC's prevalent use of mind-machine interfaces means that even someone who has lost their limbs can operate many machines with little difficulty.

One exception to Synthetic's feelings around body augmentation is the Geist, which has become so integral in both society and work that it is considered non-optional in most circles.

Non-invasive alterations, such as cosmetics, tattoos, and simple sub-dermal implants, are considered to be acceptable.

## Body Disassociation Syndrome

The NDC's prevalent use of the [G1-N2 "Geist" Advanced Interfacing Implant 2.0](#) and [BW-E-2 Anima System](#) means that some citizens spend large portions of their day with their minds 'possessing' a body other than their own. Over time, this can lead the citizens to feeling that this "other" body is, in fact, their "true" body. This is known as *Body Disassociation Syndrome* or BDS.

Root causes vary. For some, it is the feeling of power that comes with their larger, more powerful body. For others, it is simply that their body becomes increasingly less familiar as they spend more time within the machine and not their original form.

Users of the [Anima System](#), which has a 'deeper' connection than the Geist, are especially prone to this syndrome. In extreme cases, where the user has been entangled for weeks, their consciousness will fully transfer to the machine. At this point, their 'true' body *is* the machine, and their organic body is incompatible with a return transfer.

Depending on the individual's Cadre, this may not be much of a problem. Construction workers, some military units, and other cadres, who are accustomed to working alongside Synthetics, can simply adjust how they interact with the individual. For other cadres the matter can be much more complicated.

## Culture Clash

The NDC's Natural population, coming from diverse systems, species, and backgrounds, bring with them their own cultural norms and expectations. Despite the NDC's better efforts, these groups may argue and fight over old wounds and fresh insults.

For the NDC's Synthetic population, who don't view gender, species, or (non-origin) background as an issue, these cultural elements are one more thing that makes working with Naturals difficult.

## Purpose Dysphoria

A 'normal' Synthetic feels deeply in tune with the work their cadre is doing and finds joy in doing it, especially alongside other members of their cadre.

For a Synthetic created by the NDC who don't feel that they fit the purpose they were born to, society can be confusing and/or frustrating. People simply expect Synthetics of certain types to perform in certain roles, essentially stereotyping them. This *Purpose Dysphoria* is a major crisis for an individual and not one that is always well supported. The NDC's government simply doesn't have the resources to provide counseling to everyone who finds themselves affected in this way, so it is often left to the individual and their loved ones to find comfort and support.

Cadres typically act as an initial support structure for people affected with Purpose Dysphoria and will attempt to guide the individual back to normalcy. Most synthetics, however, don't fully understand what it means to feel Purpose Dysphoria. Much like our modern society, some people will think that Purpose Dysphoria is a choice or something that can simply be moved past if you "just get over it."

Ultimately, what society cares the most about is that someone is a contributing member of the society. Someone who wishes to act in a different purpose can, eventually, find acceptance within a new role and cadre - but they will likely spend their lives trying to earn that acceptance from each new person who enters their life.

## Reproduction

Clones made in the NDC are born with their reproductive systems “turned off”. While the NDC wants to grow its population, unchecked growth and an excessively growing non-contributor population (aka, children) is something that the NDC wanted to avoid when establishing its expanded cloning program.

That is not to say that the NDC would prevent clones from having children, however. A simple request to the government in an area not suffering from over-population is enough to immediately gain approval. Once approval has been gained, it is a simple stop by a doctor's office to turn a clone's reproductive systems back “on”.

What was not expected was that organic Synthetics would strongly be against natural childbirth. Reasons cited vary, but most clones agree that a natural pregnancy makes it harder to contribute. Raising a child until adulthood is certainly a strain, especially when that child is unable to contribute at a meaningful level until its teenage years.

Synthetics certainly like children, and have no issues with others who wish to have children in the 'traditional fashion', but only a rare few would make the decision to have their own.

Instead, clones who wish to grow their family often make a trip to the local cloning facility. Their combined DNA is then used to create a new clone who becomes their child. While the clone is going through its initial orientation and training, it is common for the parents to visit and form familial bonds. Clone children are sometimes created at a younger age than a standard clone, although always of a reasonable working age.

## Vagabonds

For some NDC citizens, having their basic needs met leads to a lack of motivation to participate in the military or workforce. These people, called Vagabonds, are similar to [NEETs](#) (“Not in Education, Employment, or Training”) in the NDC's society. Some individuals make a conscious decision to become a Vagabond, often due to a lack of desire to work or an inability to handle the stresses of social interactions. Others become Vagabonds due to Purpose Dysphoria, injury, or a simple inability to find work in a society dominated by clones.

Able-bodied, work-capable Vagabonds soon find the quality of their granted privileges deteriorating. They are moved into increasingly poorer conditions, until they are sharing quarters and being provided with food similar to MREs. The NDC continues to uphold its goal of providing a roof and food to each of its citizens, but the quality of life adjusts to the bare minimum to reflect the vagabonds' non-existent contributions to society.

Vagabonds are generally looked upon poorly in the NDC, where everyone is expected to pull their weight. While there is tension between Naturals and Synthetics, one thing that both groups agree upon is that 'dead weight' is bad for society. Vagabonds are tolerated, not embraced, and it is not uncommon for them to experience small forms of physical or emotional aggression from their fellow citizen.

However, citizens are not intended to be vagabonds forever. When a vagabond is once again a contributing member of society, they quickly find encouragement from others, social groups welcoming

them back in, and a swift return to normalcy in their lives. It is considered to be a badge of honor that an individual was able to rise back up and rejoin society properly - though not a badge that a citizen would intentionally seek out.

## Crime

Most crime in the NDC comes either from the Vagabond class or from individuals going through a purpose/identity crisis. When an individual moves from passive non-contribution into active hostility against the society, they are considered to be Deviants.

Crimes committed by these Deviants can range from mild outbursts, such as petty theft, all the way up to major plots targeting society itself. task forces exist to deal with the larger plots, equipped with special authority and resources that allow them to protect the NDC's citizenry.

Where possible, rehabilitation is the preferred method of handling a Deviant.

## OOO Notes

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<sup>1)</sup>

manufactured individuals, including clones and artificial intelligences

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