Towards an Understanding of the Psychological Construct of Misfit: A Grounded Theory Study

Brenda Mae Hollyoak

Submitted version deposited in Coventry University's Institutional Repository


Copyright © and Moral Rights are retained by the author. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This item cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. Pages where material has been removed are clearly marked in the electronic version. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.
Towards an Understanding of the Psychological Construct of Misfit: A Grounded Theory Study

By

Brenda Mae Hollyoak

October, 2016

Coventry University

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University’s requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Name of applicant: Brenda Hollyoak

Faculty/School/Department: [Business, Environment and Society] Strategy and Applied Management

Research project title: What are the characteristics and effects of organisational misfit? A grounded theory study of Western World based employees

Comments by the reviewer

1. Evaluation of the ethics of the proposal:

The issues raised in the previous review process have been clarified and addressed through both new attachment. The explanations provided are satisfactory.

2. Evaluation of the participant information sheet and consent form:

The issues raised in the previous review process have been clarified and addressed through both new attachment. The explanations provided are satisfactory.

3. Recommendation:

(Please indicate as appropriate and advise on any conditions. If there any conditions, the applicant will be resubmit his/her application and this will be sent to the same reviewer).

- X Approved - no conditions attached
- Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)
- Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-submit applicant)
- Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary
- Not required

Name of reviewer: Anonymous

Date: 08/01/2015
Towards an Understanding of the Psychological Construct of Misfit: A Grounded Theory Study

Abstract

The subject of a person’s perceived degree of organisational fit is well known because if someone considers that they fit in well not only with the job but with the many dimensions within the work environment, then they will feel happy, content and more productive. The topic of someone's perceived misfit, however, has not garnered much research within the fit field despite anecdotal information indicating negative outcomes such as anxiety, depression, silent rebellion and disconnect with work, thus a decline in the productive input. Misfit research needs to look at the psychological aspect in order to understand what it is, but the field is in its infancy and researchers know very little about how misfit comes about and how individuals within the workplace experience, and indeed how they cope. Moreover, the current fit and related literature seem to view misfit as an absence of fit or as the opposite to fit, and as such offers only a few definitions. The aim of this study is to present an understanding of the misfit construct from the aspect of the sufferer to the experience so that a well-founded foundation is available for future research. The findings include the identification, description, and analysis of two forms of workplace misfit: social misfit and maverickism.

An affective state of misfit is more than an absence of fit and through this study that gap in the literature will be addressed as well as opening a look into the
psychological state of misfit that a person experiences. This has been represented
in a conceptual model that explains the misfit cognition process, its antecedents,
external and internal inputs and the resultant mental state arrivals, as well as
consequences to self and the organisation.

The study, answers a call from the fit discipline for in-depth studies that
take an inside-out approach to studying misfit from the individuals’ perspective.
To do so required a qualitative research design that used a constructivist grounded
theory methodology approach. The sample set was made up of six proclaimed
misfits who were interviewed but in the absence of many coming forward a
unique and innovative approach was taken within the fit field, that of
Netnography (the application of ethnographic methods to explore data off
digitally enabled media). To go to where misfits were expressing voice in an
unabridged fashion, and capture for analysis what they had to say from open fora
Web-based English-speaking discussion blogs.

Misfit was found to be a very personal experience based not around the job
or relational demographics such as age, race, sexuality or gender but connected to
people's desire to be part of a workgroup to affirm their most basic sense of self-
identity and self-worth. The most powerful emotions and feelings come through
this study were those connected to the perceptions or actual act of ostracism from
the immediate work group, which lead on to a debilitating state of social defeat
and the subsequent increased risk of psychotic symptoms and disorders. People
coped as best they could with input from referent others so that they could feel as
if they do fit in. If that didn’t work out, then to escape the emotional and
psychological distress of a sense of misfit people sought to leave the organisation,
but that was always a viable option because of their level of continuance
commitment or a poor job market. At worst, people suffering from a sense of misfit say that they were forced to leave the organisation. If people were able to stay in employ they did one of two things; 1) stay, put up a façade of fitting in under the support of coping behaviours or 2) to mentally reframe their sense of misfit into that of a ‘socially acceptable’ position of maverikism so that they could be seen as purposefully standing apart and thus unique and special.

Whatever the outcome, a sense of misfit brings with it emotional pain and distress with reduced input from unhappy people and is an aspect that could do well to be addressed through revised management practice and support systems.

This study has been able to confirm Schneider’s 1987 proposition that it is indeed ‘the people who make the place’ and that organisational culture and the power of groups within it have a powerful influence on a person’s sense of fit or misfit.

KEY WORDS: Misfit. Person-Environment (PE) Fit, Fit, Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology, Netnography, Person-Group Fit, Self-Identity.
Acknowledgments

I wish that I had done this PhD thing thirty years ago when my brain wasn’t cluttered with so much clag, cynicism and life experiences. I also wish that I had done an (easier) positivistic study instead of an in-depth qualitative one that has kept my brain churning over during everything that I have done. It took me two years before I could even pronounce epistemology!

I am here now though, and it's with no small thanks to my supervisors Dannie Talbot, Neil Pyper and the indomitable Jon Billsberry. Jon's assignment on organisational fit which I did for my Open University Masters many years ago piqued my interest in the concept. He came to Coventry as a Professor and inspired me to become one of his misfit gang and do a PhD, one of those gang members was Dannie Talbot. I held her in high esteem because she knew so much about fit and misfit. Jon left for Deakin in Australia and Dannie became my supervisor. She has supported and guided me in her no-nonsense Dutch way through many a meltdown, even coming to the hospital with me when I broke my arm at a conference and couldn't write properly for some months. She has also been very diplomatic when reviewing many a garbled piece of work from me. My original 2nd supervisor Prof. Les Worrall died along the way of my PhD journey, and I miss him very much (despite being scared to death of him and his cleverness). Neil is the only person in School that has any knowledge and use of grounded theory methodology, so I have been fortunate in grabbing him as my second supervisor to replace Les.

Now, there's my family to thank. Surprisingly, I am still married. To Marc, who has stood by me and listened to me rant about my stupidity for many a year now. He has kindly taken himself out of the house for marathon bike rides,
sometimes halfway across the country to give me some quiet time. He has
notionally helped cook many a Christmas dinner because I was too busy reading
and writing, but it is our daughters who have been golden. Portia and Flavia have
grown up through their teenage years alongside my studies. At their meanest
stage, they have guilt tripped me with "Mother, your psychology based PhD has
decimated our teenage years because you have been so inattentive to our
psychological needs!". As adults now they are not yet in therapy so I must have
done something right along the way, but what shall I do with my time now over
Christmas periods, without a thesis to concentrate on? My Mother of 83 took over
my ironing six years ago as her way of helpin
g me, and I am going to be
disingenuous in not telling her too quickly that she should stop.

For my ‘boys’, my Papillion dogs Max and Ronnie, we are going to go on
proper walks instead of a quick whizz around the block and perhaps I will be able
to save money on paying, through guilt, a dog walker for them. I also intend to
now clean my house on a regular basis instead of living like a slob in front of my
PC eating a scrumped up dinner of whatever was in the fridge, off a plate, out of
the microwave, with just a fork.

Finally, there is Abdul a shop assistant at
my local Co-operative food supermarket.
Abdul's son, an undergraduate, died tragically
in his university rooms in the year I started on
my PhD. Each time I go into the shop, he calls me ‘Doctor' because he is so
supportive of furthering one's education, but it got to the stage when in periods of
meltdown, crippling low self-esteem and stupidity that I was too frightened and
embarrassed to go into the shop. I'd send Marc in, and I would hide outside, often
in the cold and rain because I did not want to let Abdul know how I wasn't getting on. However, I am here now though, at the start of another journey.

The end (for now).
Contents

Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................. 1

Acknowledgments .......................................................................................... 4

Contents ............................................................................................................ 7

Table of Contents .............................................................................................. 7

Table of Figures ................................................................................................ 13

Table of Tables .................................................................................................. 14

Chapter 1 - Introduction .................................................................................... 15

1.1 Significance of the study ........................................................................... 16

1.2 Problem statement ..................................................................................... 18

1.3 Purpose of the study .................................................................................. 18

1.4 Organisation of the literature review ......................................................... 19

1.5 Overview of research design and methodology ....................................... 20

1.6 Overview of data analysis .......................................................................... 22

1.7 Overview of discussion of findings ............................................................. 22

1.8 Overview to the conclusion and recommendations .................................. 23

1.9 Original contribution .................................................................................. 23

Chapter 2 - Review of the person-environment fit literature ......................... 26

Chapter 3 - Methodology ................................................................................... 29

3.1 Research design ......................................................................................... 30

3.2 Data collection ............................................................................................ 30

3.3 Data analysis .............................................................................................. 32

3.4 Discussion of findings .............................................................................. 33

3.5 Conclusion and recommendations .......................................................... 34

Chapter 4 - Conclusion and recommendations .............................................. 36

4.1 Summary of findings .................................................................................. 36

4.2 Conclusions ............................................................................................... 37

4.3 Recommendations ..................................................................................... 38

Appendix A - Table of Data ............................................................................ 40

Appendix B - Analysis ....................................................................................... 42

Appendix C - Figures ........................................................................................ 44

Appendix D - Tables .......................................................................................... 46

References ........................................................................................................... 49
2.1 PE fit and interactionism 27

2.2 Person-environment (PE) fit 28
   2.2.1 Schneider’s Attraction, Selection and Attrition (ASA) theory 29
   2.2.2 Selection and socialisation 33
   2.2.3 Socialisation 33

2.3 Supplementary and complementary fit 38

2.4 Levels and dimensions of fit 41
   2.4.1 Person-organisation (PO) fit 42
   2.4.2 Person-job (PJ) fit 43
   2.4.3 Person-group (PG) fit 44
   2.4.4 Person-vocation (PV) fit 47
   2.4.5 Person to person (PP) fit 49

2.5 Spill over and Spiralling 49

2.6 External dimensions 52
   2.6.1 Changing dimensions 53

2.7 Summary of PE fit 56

2.8 Measures of fit – part 2b 58

2.9 Direct measures of perceived fit 59
   2.9.1 Molar fit 60
   2.9.2 Molecular fit 61

2.10 Indirect measurement - Objective/actual fit 62
   2.10.1 Perceived indirect fit - Subjective indirect fit 63
   2.10.2 Criticism of direct and indirect measurement of fit 64

2.11 Measures of fit - Organisational culture profile (OCP) 66

2.12 Polynomial regression 67
2.13 Cluster analysis ................................................................. 69
2.14 Conclusion of PE Fit measures ........................................... 70
2.15 The importance of understanding organisational misfit .......... 73
   2.15.1 Misfit ................................................................. 75
   2.15.2 Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) ....................... 77
   2.15.3 Niche construction theory ........................................... 79
   2.15.4 What misfit is not ................................................. 81
   2.15.5 How the term ‘misfit’ is viewed in extant literature .......... 82
2.16 Recent developments in misfit research ............................... 85
2.17 Summary of PE fit ............................................................. 89

Chapter 3 - Methodology .......................................................... 92
3.1 Introduction: A grounded theory study ................................. 92
3.2 Research questions and objectives ...................................... 94
3.3 Research paradigm .......................................................... 95
3.4 Philosophical viewpoint ..................................................... 96
3.5 Ontology – subjectivism ..................................................... 98
3.6 Epistemology ..................................................................... 99
3.7 Critical reflection ............................................................. 101
3.8 My social background ....................................................... 106
3.9 Credibility and trustworthiness .......................................... 107
3.10 Reliability and validity ...................................................... 107
3.11 Generalisation ............................................................... 111
3.12 Using grounded theory (GTM) for misfit research ................. 114
3.12.1 Grounded theory – 1st generation from a positivist perspective, the classic approach 119

3.12.2 Grounded theory split 120

3.12.3 Strauss & Corbin’s grounded theory 121

3.13 Grounded theory – 2nd generation 123

3.14 Methods of data collection 125

3.14.1 Finding the misfits 125

3.15 Self-presentation on social media 129

3.16 Internet sites examined 130

3.17 Ethics 132

3.18 Data captured 138

3.19 Profile of the online participants 138

3.20 The NVivo 11 coding process 138

3.21 Data analysis & coding levels 143

3.21.1 The first order coding process – initial/open 144

3.21.2 Reviewing and refining the open codes 148

3.21.3 Example of coding at its broadest level 149

3.22 Conclusion 153

Chapter 4 - Data analysis 158

4.1 Introduction 158

4.2 Data structure 159

4.3 The consequences of an individual’s sense of misfit 161

4.3.1 Summary of outcomes of misfit feelings 162
5.2.7 Category 7 - Strong feelings over sense of misfit

5.2.8 Category 8 - Core - Outsider position – group influence

5.2.9 Category 9 - Core - Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues

5.3 Model of misfit cognition and affective processes

5.3.1 Antecedents

5.3.2 Misfit subconscious cognition process

5.3.3 External input from caring referent others

5.3.4 External influences 1 – departmental culture and 2 – referent others

5.3.5 Internal influences

5.3.6 Psychological consequences

5.3.7 Findings

5.4 Relevance to the PE fit literature

5.5 Summary and conclusions

Chapter 6 - Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Answers to the research questions

6.2.1 RQ1 What are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit?

6.2.2 RQ2 What are the consequences to self and perhaps others of feeling like a misfit?

6.2.3 RQ3 How do employees manage their feelings or position of misfit?

6.3 Key findings and contributions

6.3.1 Finding 1 and contribution

6.3.2 Finding 2 and contribution

6.3.3 Finding 3 and contribution

6.3.4 Contributions to the literature

6.4 Implications and contributions to practice
Table of Figures

Figure 1 Jansen and Kristof-Brown’s (2006) higher order multi-dimensional PE fit showing long-term tenure relationships 46
Figure 2 Multidimensional model of person-environment fit 47
Figure 3 Jansen and Kristof-Brown’s (2006) - multidimensional model of Person-Environment (PE) 50
Figure 4 Attributes for profiling 138
Figure 8 Coding at its broadest level - 1 149
Figure 6 Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes 249
Figure 7 Mapping of research questions and findings to the Model of Cognition and Affective Processes 252
Figure 8 Start of the misfit process - triggers 254
Figure 9 Misfit subconscious cognition processes – instantaneous internal responses 256
Figure 10 External influencers 259
Figure 11 Internal influencers 260
Figure 12 New mental state arrival 261
Figure 13 Psychological consequences 263
Table 1 Individual and organizational misfit dimensions (Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013)........................... 88
Table 2 Validity Procedures within Qualitative Lens and Paradigm Assumptions........................................ 111
Table 3 Results of Netnography ................................................................................................................. 135
Table 4 Focused coding - 2nd order coding ................................................................................................. 150
Table 5 Nine Coding Groups ..................................................................................................................... 153
Table 6 Data structure - Second-Order Themes............................................................................................ 160
Table 7 examples of narratives from the 9 categories .................................................................................. 161
Table 8 Misfit over time or trigger event ...................................................................................................... 163
Table 9 HR or management ineffective ........................................................................................................ 165
Table 10 Misfit or fit connected to demographics ......................................................................................... 167
Table 11 Wants to fit in or needs to fit to keep job ....................................................................................... 173
Table 12 Misfit seen in a positive light .......................................................................................................... 175
Table 13 Strong feelings over sense of misfit .............................................................................................. 178
Table 14 Outsider position – group influences ............................................................................................ 179
Table 15 Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues ................................................................. 188
Table 16 Reduction of 9 coding categories to 7 ......................................................................................... 201
Table 17 Core categories towards theory development ............................................................................. 202
Table 18 Antecedents to Misfit (expressed in the data) .............................................................................. 204
Table 19 Consequences of misfit ................................................................................................................ 205
Table 20 How to cope with Misfit .............................................................................................................. 208
Table 21 What to do with someone who feels like a misfit ....................................................................... 210
Table 22 Maverick statements .................................................................................................................... 285
Chapter 1 - Introduction

Misfit as a term has recently come to the fore from within the field of person-environment fit (PE fit), a core discipline within industrial and organisational psychology (I/O). I/O psychology is the scientific study of the behaviour and attitudes of people in work settings. Such studies seek to understand and guide what people do in the workplace. Then to apply psychological theories and principles to organisations, with the goal of developing people to be more efficient in what they do by guiding organisations on the need to attend to their physical and mental wellbeing. For the organisations, the goal of I/O is to facilitate increased productivity through the employees (Koppeş, 2003; SIOP, 2015). One of the subjects within I/O psychology that helps in the knowledge and practice towards those outcomes is that of person-environment (PE) fit. Where ‘fit’ is the positive interactional relationship, through compatibility or match of a person and some aspect of their work environment. To date, it still presents the best way of understanding human behaviour in the workplace (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Kristof, 1996). From the Western perspective, a sense of good fit brings with it constructive outcomes for the person, for example, as job satisfaction and commitment, positive personality development, personality consistency, higher self-esteem, lower agreeableness and neuroticism (Edwards, 2008; Pervin, 1968; Roberts & Robins, 2004; Schneider, 2001). An understanding of what makes up the well-researched construct of ‘fit’ is a useful starting point for looking at misfit because it is in this field that questions were
posed by authors around theories not applicable to misfit, to people who display or report a lack of fit at work.

It had not been possible to make categorical statements about misfit such as it existing at the end of a fit continuum, and to what happens in the event of misfit (Wheeler, Coleman-Gallagher, Brouer, & Sablynski, 2007). What fit researchers know is that just because there is no fit does not necessarily mean that misfit exists (Billsberry, 2008; Edwards, 2008). Empirical studies have started to look at misfit, such as PhD theses by Talbot, (2010) and Williamson, (2013) who say that misfit is a felt psychological experience and negative state to be in, and indicating that is both damaging to the individual and the organisation. It follows that it would need an individual not to experience misfit, to recognise the state to re-establish a ‘fit' state. A separate understanding of the psychological misfit state rather than it being a component of the well-researched PE fit was therefore required. This thesis has answered that call.

1.1 Significance of the study

Person-environment fit research to date indicates that if a person feels that they no longer fit, they demonstrate reduced engagement with work. The disengagement may well have a detrimental effect on themselves and others in the workplace. Especially if the person feeling as if they do not fit in starts changing things to suit themselves (Chatman, 1989; Coldwell, Billsberry, Van Meurs, & Marsh, 2008; Dickson et al., 2008). At its worst, if the employee is in a severe cognitive state of affective misfit or perceived injustice they may resort to workplace deviant behaviour. With Robinson & Bennett, (1995:556) saying that this is “voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms, and thus is perceived as threatening the well-being of the organization, its members
or both”. Such actions are becoming more noticeable in recent years with Dunlop & Lee, (2004) posing that as organisations change themselves in response to economic pressures. Restructuring to be more productive with less, and with new people in new geographical areas. Changing responsibilities, shifting power and control there has been an increase in misconduct or deviance in the workplace. These are expressed in the form of work sabotage, constructive absenteeism and even physical violence at work, as people seek to cope with change and hang on to some sense of power and autonomy. The effects of these negative acts can create a financial cost on productivity and performance, and impact negatively on the emotional wellbeing of the perpetrators and hapless victims.

As already mentioned stress is one of the possible outcomes of perceiving misfit when demands (of the organisation) mismatch against abilities (Edwards, 2008; Talbot, 2010). Stress causes illness, and illness is known to be “linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as more errors” (Executive, 2015). A report prepared for the UK Health and Safety Executive talks of 91.5 million days each year lost through stress-related illnesses. Within Europe the figures aren't much better, with the International Labour Organisation proposing that “stress is a factor in between 50 and 60 percent of all lost working days, a huge cost regarding both human distress and impaired economic performance” (Organization, 2012). If as initial research is showing that psychological sense of misfit links to stress, then there is a need to understand the construct and the cognisant processes involved.
1.2 Problem statement

The term ‘misfit’ in the context of the person-environment research is advanced as an essential area of study (Billsberry, 2008; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010; Talbot & Billsberry, 2011; Wheeler, 2010). Misfit is a word that people use to describe themselves or others, but in these early stages of research into the construct, it shares definitional and conceptual problems that are common in the organisational fit domain. Also, there are other areas of interest around what defines the affective state of misfit, how is it experienced, the emotions around it, what causes the experience, how is it dealt with, are any common predispositions to the state and what are the outcomes? Do the results of this study match up to the literature and previous misfit studies? Are there identifiable common trigger points and interactions that would be of use in management practice to avoid or mitigate unwanted consequences such as valuable employees leaving or affecting others around them. These are areas of interest that I sought to investigate, to respond to the observation made by Wheeler et al., (2007:15) that “the area of misfit is wide open to researchers”. Specifically, what is unanswered so far is what causes misfit, or how misfit is conceptualised (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007; Talbot, 2010).

1.3 Purpose of the study

To fill a gap in the PE literature by presenting an understanding of what causes the psychological state of organisational misfit as experienced by a subset of English speaking people in different geographical areas and across various relational demographics who have chosen to express ‘voice’ on the internet and thus outside of their organisations’ domain. To present also an understanding of what brings about feelings of a misfit. To identify ways in which people cope
with their misfit and to show them in a conceptual model of *Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes*. To also provide a robust definition of the term through constructing new theory. In keeping with calls from the researchers in the field of PE fit, to examine the inner aspects of what misfit might be (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013) I put together the following objectives.

**Research Objectives**

1. To examine whether there are certain factors that lead to someone’s sense of misfit
2. To investigate whether there are consequences of an individual’s sense of misfit
3. To examine how people cope and manage their sense of misfit on a daily basis

**Research Questions**

1. What are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit?
2. What are the consequences to self and perhaps others of feeling like a misfit?
3. How do employees manage their feelings or position of misfit?

**1.4 Organisation of the literature review**

In this study, because I applied a grounded theory methodology (GTM) I did not plan to start it with a traditional literature review. Allowing instead knowledge and understanding of the problem under study to emerge without pre-formed ideas from the literature (as much as possible). This approach cohered with the argument made by the original authors of GTM, Glaser & Strauss (1967). They advised against doing a literature review in the first instance to
allow categories to emerge from the data uninhibited by contamination from previous misconceptions, extant literature and connected hypotheses (Dunne, 2011). The discussion however over the years since 1967 including those from the GTM revisionists Strauss (from Glaser and Strauss) and Corbin (1978, 1990) put forward the usefulness of an early review into relevant literature and related areas. This approach arose in the period of GTM’s “reformulation and repudiation” (Charmaz, 2000:512) by Strauss and Corbin (1990) where an initial literature review and inclusion of experience was considered useful, and this I have done within chapter two. Moreover, I present the initial literature review in three parts, a) a review of person-environment (PE) fit literature, b) review of fit measures and c) review of misfit literature and its importance to fit scholars.

1.5 Overview of research design and methodology

In the first part of chapter 3 I re-present the research problem and the reason underpinning a qualitative, exploratory approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how people feel at work, and, the behaviours they say that they exhibit (self-report) or are reported to display (objectively) by human resource departments and similar, to build a picture of a concept of 'misfit'. To do so I selected an interpretivist approach to understand how affective misfit is constructed in the mind of people, what perceptions they generate, where and why. I go on to discuss my research design and explain why I chose a constructivist epistemology as being the most suitable for this psychological perspective on people’s narratives. I also debate other qualitative methods along with a rationale for choosing the second generation of GTM in the flavour of Charmaz (2006) which also concurs with my subjective ontological and a constructivist rather than constructionist epistemological position which I make
explicit. In so doing I have been able to gain an in-depth understanding of people’s feelings, behaviours and characteristics at work, and thus to build a picture of the psychological construct of ‘misfit. To do so involved me exploring people’s narratives and their perceptions of interactions with other people and situations within their workplace environment, rather than start from the premise of a hypothesis coming out of and popularly used within the PE fit field, (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I also present limitations and criticisms of grounded theory as well as including sections on critical reflection, reliability and validity, and generalisation.

I present the methodology chapter in two sections, a) and b) starting with my epistemological position and then the first levels of coding and sub category generation from the data. The reason for this two-part presentation, chapter 3a and 3b is not only to take the reader through the traditional steps of a PhD methodology chapter, but to guide them through the data collection and analysis under a grounded theory inductive approach. The data collection and analysis process went on concurrently and these hallmark features are discussed along with other principles of GTM. I also thought it sensible to guide the reader through my use of a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software package (CAQDAS) in the coding processes, to explain how and why I made categories and connections that I did, whilst also providing a reporting function that displays logic, rigour and step through analysis of data. The ethics procedure and authority covering my pilot, one to one interviews are also included as well as that to cover the use of primary data collected from open source web site fora.
1.6 Overview of data analysis

In chapter four I present my data and the results of my analysis, starting with fracturing that data to identify and generate substantive codes emergent within it, as well as then identifying relevance and linkages. In my coding process of discussants’ narratives, often line by line, I sought to capture everything that was said and inferred cohering therefore with my constructivist-interpretative paradigm in order to explore what could be multiple realities of affective misfit. I also show my process and thinking around the next GTM stage, that of 2nd level concept development leading on to category creation, using the memoing function within NVivo 11, as well as demonstrating the principles of GTM, the processes called constant comparison and theoretical sampling to further analysis the data. Going on to synthesise and link common themes, their interrelationships and inferred causality/influences, as well as linkages, past and present arising within people’s interactions at work. Finally, to regroup subcategories at the focus level, that amount to nine categories for further examination towards theory development; which not only started to answer the 3 research questions but contributed to the development of new findings, and provided a foundation for the development of a conceptual model of affective misfit in chapter 5.

1.7 Overview of discussion of findings

In chapter 5 I bring forward for discussion, the results presented in the data analysis chapter as well as presenting an additional review of the literature found to be pertinent to ‘misfit’, from fit and several adjacent fields, and to thus follow the requirements of a GTM to do so. This has brought out several new points of theory to develop such as that for internal influencers (that cause stress) - Adult Attachment Theory – ostracism, Diathesis-Stress Model – ostracism, fit to the
group, belongingness, social inclusion and identity through desired group membership for reinforcement of self-esteem (overall feelings of self-worth). As well as the effect on the misfit cognition from external influencers, some of which are already mentioned in the fit literature and where so, they are further discussed.

I offer answers to the three research questions, present also three key findings, thus contributions, a theory and definition of misfit and, a Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes. Most importantly, I have identified from these fora discussants two types of misfit, the majority of whom I describe as ‘social’ misfits, the others I describe as mavericks.

1.8 Overview to the conclusion and recommendations

This final chapter starts with presenting answers to the three initial scoping questions, followed by three key findings and contribution to misfit literature that have emerged from the data during the application of a grounded theory methodology (GTM). I continue the chapter to discuss the value of my contributions to the field of PE fit in which misfit is located. In addition, I also discuss the importance to management practice of recognising and dealing with employees who may be in a state of misfit, so that their wellbeing can be supported and contribution to the organisation maintained and developed. Strengths and limitations of the methodology and methods applied as well as the nature of the data set are discussed and these lead into suggestions for future research. Concluding remarks finalise the chapter.

1.9 Original contribution

This research goes towards filling the void around the psychological construct of misfit within an organisational environment, by exploring a subset of
peoples’ perceptions, experiences and reactions to what they regard as ‘misfit’. I have done this by examining freely expressed commentary on web-based internet discussion fora, from what I see as two subsets of misfits that have expressed voice, a) social misfits and b) mavericks. We don’t know how many more are out there and hiding away. Not only have (in the moment) causes to these people’s perceptions of misfit been identified, but so has the impact, that for some their previous life experiences have had towards this emotionally painful state, similar in intensity to a social death. Additionally, the effects of internal and external factors are identified that go towards the final misfit thoughts. These in turn have led to three new findings as contributions to knowledge of the misfit research field:

1. Feelings of misfit are akin to an emotional social death that comes about as a result of a threat to an important psychological need triggered by interactions within the organisation

2. Misfit is an automatic felt deep emotion brought on by a connection to a past experience or belief, and transcends objective rationale

3. Misfit can be rationalised or amplified (cognitive interpretation) within the context of internal and external influencers

These are embedded within the five internal influencers of:

1. Fit to the group
2. belongingness
3. social inclusion and identity through desired group membership for reinforcement of self-esteem (overall feelings of self-worth).
4. Fear of ostracism
For the external influencers, those that have the capacity to influence the misfits’ final mental state around whether they perceive that they misfit or not are two external influences of:

1. Internet fora, friends and family
2. Departmental culture i.e. subculture/supervisor

These offer to a caring employer ideas of how management practice can support the wellbeing of employees before more serious issues such as psychological and physiological issues become manifest, and are discussed under the heading implications and contributions to practice.
In chapter one I presented a brief overview of the person-environment (PE) fit construct and showed that it is a desirable state. In theory people seek compatibility of their characteristics to those within an organisational environment, so that people can enjoy interactions that fit in with their ‘self-views’, feelings of comfort and acceptance within the workplace and so give rise to positive outcomes. Moreover, varying levels of fit can then influence a range of work-related attitudes and behaviours (De Cooman, De Gieter, & Hofmans, 2010; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006). Not much, however, is known about the psychological state of misfit, where the antecedents and outcomes of that felt position might be somewhat different. The mental state is theorised to produce emotional consequences that are not in keeping with providing personal satisfaction, or underpinning behaviours that result in positive outcomes for the organisation. Indeed, misfit cognition is posed as an unwanted condition, possibly an illness (Billsberry, 2008), or as expressed through increased levels of stress (Fevre, Matheny, & Kolt, 2003), brought about because people feel that they do not fit with particular dynamics of the organisational environment. Research into this state of misfit is posed as being relatively neglected (Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013).

Not much is known about misfit by researchers in the fit field beyond saying that “our theories of fit must also include the potential for fit to have negative personal consequences for individuals experiencing misfit” (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010:9). To examine what we already know about misfit and to underpin research into this area, first of all, requires a comprehension of the organisational fit field. I present this chapter in three sections. The first outlines
PE fit theory and explores what is known about fit. The second discusses the research methodologies which have been used in PE fit research and how these approaches have shaped our understanding of fit, and the third specifically focuses on what is known about misfit and its outcomes.

2.1 PE fit and interactionism

Person-environment (PE) fit is based on the premise that people behave in the way that they do, not only because of the way they are (personal characteristics) or due to the environment or circumstance, but due to an interaction between the two (Lewin, 1951; Sekiguchi, 2004). People’s behaviour is a function of the ‘life space’, or the interdependent relationship of the person with the environment (Lewin, 1951; Swann & Bosson, 2008). Moreover, people are not passive receivers of environmental influences but will actively seek out those that best suit their personalities, and that which support their preferences and tendencies. To seek social support from others and thus boost a sense of personal well-being that goes with a sense of ‘fit' (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996). So important is the organisational environment in support of a person's identity and feelings of well-being that people will seek to change the immediate environment. That includes finding the ‘right' sets of people to mix with to better suit themselves rather than exit the organisation (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Laland, Odling-Smee, & Feldman, 2000; Van Vianen & Stoelhorst, 2007a; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). For the organisation, this ‘fit' brings about increased productivity, reduced turnover, effective teamwork and creativity to name but a few. Such is the importance of good PE fit that the concept is the cornerstone of Human Resource practices, and underpins research in organisational behaviour and organisational psychology (Edwards, Cable,
Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006; Edwards, Caplan, & Van Harrison, 1998; Kristof, 1996). Since to understand how the characteristics of people and the environment interact and whether they are at a comparable level, leads to an understanding of behaviour and how to predict and change it.

2.2 Person-environment (PE) fit

The 1960s and 1970s had already started to see person-environment (PE) fit models develop from the construct of the continuous interaction between personal and situational factors. In that, there were two leading but yet divisive schools of thought to explaining organisational behaviour: firstly, where researchers saw the interactions as led by a person's characteristics, and next, those that saw the influences as coming from the situation itself. These schools were directed by the “personologist” (Bowers, 1973) and “situationist” (Mischel, 1973) respectively. Person characteristics were considered to include the biological traits, those that were thought to underpin personalities such as values, goals and abilities. For the situation, the defining features were regarded as the intrinsic and extrinsic pay and reward systems, and the physical aspects of an environment. An open debate between these two psychologists to discuss what causes behaviour resulted in agreement that saw the start of the interactionist school of thought. That is that the interactionist perspective on the (PE) fit paradigm favours neither personality traits nor the situation as being the leading influence on what produces behaviour. Instead, it is the interplay between the two that drives a particular attitude or behaviour. An aspect that was looked at by Argyris, (1957) in his theoretical work upon job enlargement and participatory management, where he too claimed that a person’s behaviour is a result of the interaction between the person and organisational environment.
These understandings became the foundations of the study of PE fit through the field of industrial-organisational psychology (I/O), to identify the characteristics of people that would best suit similar dimensions within the organisation. The match of those attributes reflects the concept of PE fit (Chatman, 1991; O’Reilly et al., 1991; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Towards that understanding, I now present a cornerstone theory in the PE fit field to give context to developments in the last twenty years, and to identify and follow up upon mentions around misfit.

2.2.1 Schneider’s Attraction, Selection and Attrition (ASA) theory

Out of the theoretical work into interactional psychology, Schneider, a psychologist, put forward his proposal that organisations were a function of the people within it. Through his Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) Framework he presented a way of explaining the cause of organisational behaviour (Schneider, 1987). Theorising that people were attracted to organisations which had similar attributes to their own. Specifically, he asserted that certain kinds of people would make up a business. The outcome of each organisation's composition is that it will “define the nature of the organisation, its structures, processes, and culture” (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995:748). Those institutions therefore attract and then select people who have attributes deemed to best fit (Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al., 1995). If, however, people find that they have made an incorrect choice and did not fit then they will leave in a process called ‘attrition’. I further discuss ASA as a critical contribution to fit studies with aspects that could be developed around misfit.

Schneider's attraction, selection, attrition (ASA model) comes from the principle that people do not randomly select organisations to work for, nor do
those firms randomly choose people just to do a job. Each party looks to find an element of ‘fit’ between their values, attitudes and personality because positive outcomes would follow (Schneider, 1987). Schneider originally talked about ‘attraction’ in the context of the work by Holland (Gottfredson, Jones, & Holland, 1993; Holland, 1959, 1973, 1976) and his Vocational Choice Theory which looked to match people’s ‘personalities to work environments so that personal level job success and satisfaction would ensue. According to Holland's theory, there are six types of vocational personality With empirical evidence over the last forty years (Barrick, Mount, & Gupta, 2003; Spokane, 1985) showing these are still in common use. Supporting the proposition that people should seek careers to best match their personalities because such choices would enable them to function at their highest potential and achieve the greatest job satisfaction.

Schneider loosely took Holland’s theory, along with evidence from researchers such as Tom, 1971 in (Cable & Judge, 1996:294) that “....people prefer organizations that have the same ‘personality, as they do, where fit is the congruence between individuals’ and organizations’ values”. Underpinning these statements was, as restated by Schneider, (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2012) when referring to the foundation work of Argyris (1957) was the notion that where the experience of psychological success by employees was permitted then the organisation would achieve competitive superiority. That starts with attracting and then selecting the ‘right sort of person'. Once attracted to a specific type of organisation they step into the next stage, to select and to be selected by the organisation (Schneider et al., 1995).

Selection is the second stage of Schneider's 1987 ASA where in that process matches are made against what each party desires in exchange for effort
against a rewards and recognition deal. Generally, from the organisation's perspective ‘fit’ is sought from the prospective employee to not only to the job requirements but the internal culture as well. All to facilitate achievement of its goals (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al., 1995; Wheeler, Buckley, Halbesleben, Brouer, & Ferris, 2005). The organisational culture is the set of cognitions and values that are shared by existing members and underpin behaviours; and fit of newcomers to this profile is sought in the context of people surrounding the actual job (Elfenbein & O’Reilly, 2007).

To facilitate that process, recruiting personnel, as posited by Bretz Jr., Ash, & Dreher, (1988) use established recruiting resources for sorting suitable applicants. For example, applying minimum threshold scores and competencies narrows the pool of people suitable for selection. Add to that range of appropriate characteristics, is the organisational requirement that the psychological profile of applicants also needs to be considered for a match or similarity. During the selection process recruits, therefore, are sought as ‘right types' to fit in with the organisational culture and climate. That being described differently by authors, but taken in this context to mean the observable ways in which people act within the organisation: the artefacts, espoused beliefs, values, together with the often unobservable underlying assumptions and behaviours (Schein, 2010; Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013). The attention to selecting the right people was, as Schneider (1987) proposed, an alternative to changing the organisation’s structure and processes. To look instead closely at the people because it is through them that those structures and processes will change. To continue with employees of the same and attitude working towards the organisation’s high performance, and not to hinder it (Bretz Jr. et al., 1988; Jung et al., 2007).
Selection is done in a variety of ways. As a first line filter, the use of psychometric testing is a way to assess and select not only for applicants’ ability to do a job but for their motivation, values and culture fit with an organisation (Garavan, 2007). Another way, and often in addition to psychometric testing, the higher the seniority of the job involved is a face to face interview. The interviewer demonstrates the values of the organisation while seeking to see them reflected by the interviewee (Cable & Judge, 1996), perhaps unintentionally (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Because a match of the interviewee's characteristics and personal values against the organisation's values and culture is sought as this is considered central to person-environment fit and the resultant (good) job performance (Chatman, 1991; Judge, 2007; O’Reilly et al., 1991).

In face to face interview situations, however, these hiring decisions sometimes have the flaws of the interviewers’ perceptions (halo effect) to the perceived degree of fit. Empirical studies conducted by Cable & Judge, (1997), Rynes & Gerhart, (1990) and Kristof-Brown, (2000) found that where there was positive rapport going on between interviewee and interviewer, the latter formed a perception of ‘good fit’ and went on to influence hiring decisions. Influenced is a possible key word here because in a study conducted in a university's placement centre (Adkins, Russell, & Werbel, 1994) the consideration towards a person’s level of fit didn't take place until a job offer was made. At which point perhaps it is too late to identify and act in respect of a new employee that might be considered to misfit. Induction and socialisation activities are though regarded as a good way of developing and reinforcing a new employee's sense of fit and is done through events and processes that facilitate general socialising and the
development of sound interpersonal relationships at work (Cooper-Thomas, Anderson, & Van Vianen, 2004).

2.2.2 Selection and socialisation

The second part of the selection stage of Schneider’s ASA theory also includes organisational socialisation. In that, newcomers to the organisation are acculturated and taught ‘how things work’ around here. To learn about the organisation's culture, values and vision, to acquire the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organisational role to be accepted and thus fitting in (Schein, 2010). That phase requires evaluations of fit or misfit occurring during social interactions …”starting at recruitment and continue through selection, socialisation processes and in ongoing work experiences” (Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013:53). Socialisation activities also develop the psychological bonds with the new ‘groupings’, to underpin people’s natural desire to be with similar others (Tsui, Egan, & O’Reilly, 1992). To be part of the organisational climate defined as “the shared perceptions of and the meaning attached to the policies, practices, and procedures employees experience and the behaviours that people observe getting rewarded and that is supported and expected (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007). In keeping therefore with what (Schneider, Smith, Taylor, & Fleenor, 1998:464) mention as already being present in the person “because people are not randomly assigned to settings; they actively choose themselves into them”.

2.2.3 Socialisation

Taking evidence from the socialisation literature (Alwin, Cohen, & Newcombe, 1991; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004) lasting and profound changes to personal values can happen because of organisational membership. Indeed,
Chatman, (1989, 1991) shows that socialisation experiences have “three times more influence on recruit adjustment than does their initial personality upon entering the organization” (Brent Smith, 2008:67) Such action was demonstrated in Chatman's 1991 study of 171 entry-level auditors into US public accounting firms. The study showed that fit was at its highest where the recruits' values were congruent with those of the organisation. For the other recruits, socialisation processes, in which attention is given to induction and social network building were needed to enable people to feel that they fitted in with the organisational culture. Again, this is an aspect that is also supported in a longitudinal study by Cable & Parsons, (2001). They surveyed 1,000 American university graduates over two years in respect of their employment for their fit to their employing organisations. Two hypotheses were presented; firstly, newcomers who experienced formal, sequential and fixed socialisation tactics would report greater fit perceptions rather than random and variable ones. Formal being the activities designed to induct new employees into taking on formally established goals, often through structured training classes. For sequential, new employees are informed about the flow of activities and expected experiences. For the fixed socialisation tactics, employees get to know about the timing involved in each socialisation step. All stages designed to reducing newcomers' uncertainty and anxiety (Allen, 2006; Van Maanen & Schein, 1977). For random and variable socialisation practices, these are just as described, activities that are driven by the individuals and as such have no structure or timings. The second hypothesis was that newcomers' values would change in the direction of the organisation because of those same socialisation approaches (rather than random and variable). Both hypotheses were proved. Socialisation activities matter and work in developing a
newcomer's sense of fit to the organisational environment and is worthwhile for both parties. In recent years the term ‘onboarding’ is used to describe socialisation approaches. They have been gaining in importance in the changing face of work, where people will often have more than one job. People will move more frequently between jobs, and each time faces the need to fit in and be accepting of organisational systems and cultures; to operate effectively as soon as possible (Baur & Erdogan, 2011; Pike, 2014; Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Perceptions of fitting in are therefore important as are the perception of misfit’ which as discussed in chapter three impinge on an individual’s ability to perform at their best so leading to frequency of turnover, expensive at that.

Socialisation might help in initial feelings of misfit though. Socialisation and relationship building serves two purposes as related to fit. In the first instance, the process acts to consolidate initial impressions of an individual's desired good fit to the organisation. Or, where there might have been a perceived weak linkage from the individual's viewpoint, it can be developed into a stronger one by experienced members of the organisation mentoring the new ones (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004). It also starts with the build-up of job satisfaction and skills training (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006). Moreover, as highlighted by Talbot, (2010:34) through socialisation “actual fit and perceived fit become more similar over time”, referring to the study by (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004) carried out on new employees to a London based firm to examine actual and perceived organisational fit at entry and at four months later. Socialisation activities might not however always work with someone who perceives that they have made the wrong choice, in that they don’t feel as they fit in. “It is generally accepted that individuals establish relatively stable values through life experiences and that
organizational socialization is unlikely to alter the basic value structure an individual brings to an organization” (Luske & Oliver, 1974 as cited in Judge & Bretz Jr., 1992:261).

Despite socialisation activities taking place, value sets where they are widely different in the first place cannot be majorly changed (Krahe, 1992), and thus the selection process may have failed so creating a position of ill fit or no fit. In Schneider's 1987 ASA model, attrition is the third stage in which he postulated that … “while people may feel attracted to a place they may find that they may make errors, and finding that they do not fit, will leave” (Schneider, 1987:442). For that person who does not fit in, little is said about any positive or negative effects upon them or the organisation. Moreover, for these people who do not fit, there is little evidence to demonstrate, one way or the other that they always leave. Even in circumstances when the organisation for which they work goes through significant changes or ‘shocks', causing value sets to change, a person may not leave (Wheeler et al., 2005).

Through continuing cycles of attraction, selection and attrition, Schneider, (1987) and Schneider et al. (1995) present the view that the organisation ends up with a homogeneous group of people with similar attributes and behaviour. At best, this organisational homogeneity facilitates smooth and efficient coordination, communication and team working giving rise to increased productivity. At worst, is that through Schneider’s homogeneity hypothesis a collection of people with a restricted range of attitudes and behaviours is created. The resulting group of people with similar or same attributes demonstrates not only lack of or limited creativity but also the flexibility needed in the face of diverse groupings and rapid environmental change. If not combated, such
homogeneity could as Schneider (1983, 1987) hypothesised lead to organisational decline and eventual corporate death, a point he reinforced in a later paper (Schneider et al., 1995). In that although good fit could well be beneficial for a person, for the organisations it was the opposite, in that too much fit or homogeneity could progress to “organisations incapable of adapting to organisational change” (Schneider, Kristof-Brown, Goldstein, & Smith, 1997:399).

Schneider's ASA framework comes from the premise that the ‘right' sort of people are attracted to and selected by an organisation. Subsequent empirical work by Billsberry (2004) looking at the values of 621 job applicants contradicts Schneider’s proposition that job applicants in the ‘attraction’ phase are drawn to an organization because of its characteristics. He poses instead that applicants are attracted to organisations because they seek a specific type of work. The aspect of fit is only considered when there is a choice between organizations of the same vocational kind, for example, when an accountant has a choice between firms A or B; only then will applicants look more closely at the perceived fit between their personality and that of the organization.

Nonetheless, it is generally assumed that people and organizations start by being attracted to one another with the intention that both parties seek fit, but that is in an ideal economic world where there is a plethora of choice. Consider that, in dire financial climes, in times of limited job choice from the applicant’s perspective and from an organisational standpoint where there is insufficient supply of specific skill sets, complete fit is a luxury and not a high-ranking selection criterion (Morley, 2007). People may enter the organisation under the guise of complementary fit, offering skills and abilities that are needed by that...
agency and where misfit ends up being subsumed by both parties. I continue my review with a critique of the foundations of the PE fit field because of their probable input to understanding misfit, starting with the need to understand the difference between supplementary and complementary fit.

2.3 Supplementary and complementary fit

The PE fit literature addresses a central distinction between two conceptualisations of fit, that of supplementary and complementary fit (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). For the supplementary type of fit, a person has characteristics that are like those already present in the organization, and they fit in on that basis. Such as an accountant, with a quiet demeanour and interest in trainspotting joining a group of equally quiet accountants who also indulge in trainspotting. Studies on supplementary fit typically look at value congruence between employee and the organisation as the moderator (Kristof, 1996). In more recent years, research has looked at a broader range of similarities, where people assess the extent of their fit based on their perception of the fit of their psychological characteristics, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours with others in the organisation (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Piasentin & Chapman, 2007). Similarity not only brings about reinforcement of those shared characteristics but follows the line of thinking from social psychological research that people find it more desirable to interact with similar psychological others. Additionally, being with similar others can bolster an individual’s model of self-conception which makes for a comfortable existence. It may also better enable an individual to create what sociologists call ‘social environments that foster the survival of people’s self-views’ (McCall & Simmons, 1966; Swann, 1987).
For complementary fit, on the other hand, a person adds something that is missing within the organization (such a particular skill or ability). In say, situations where “the weaknesses or needs of the environment are offset by the strength of the individual, and vice-versa” (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987:271). Complementary fit, therefore, is based on needs fulfilment, when one party fulfils a gap or a need in the other, (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010b; Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007). Needs fulfilment is used here in the context of what is termed a situational needs-supplies fit within the organisation. For example, where the compatibility between an individual's characteristics towards what a job has to offer (supplies), the demand for autonomy, or say, the level of pay and reward are sought (Sekiguchi, 2007; Westerman & Cyr, 2004). In contrast, there is demands-abilities fit, where an organisation's demands are met by the abilities of an individual. To use a sporting analogy, where a losing football team needs a set of skills through a type of manager that can turn around the fortunes of the team.

Piasentin & Chapman (2007) in their research into whether fit comes from perceptions of similarity (supplementary fit) or complementarity (complementary fit) say that a person does not have to 'fit in' from the viewpoint of supplementary fit. That people don’t necessarily feel that they must be similar to others. Their perception of fit comes from having something that the organisation wants, and they can provide, or the organisation is supplying what the person wants. It is someone's sense of being different or of being 'unique' that enables them to fit in through complementing the organisation’s characteristics. Furthermore, implicit in the complementarity model is “the notion of being different is perceived as desirable and valued by the organisation” (Piasentin & Chapman, 2007:343).
Thus, the level of perceived fit, (when a person’s preferences with the perception of what the organisation offers are congruent, or close to), will be high. If though someone feels that their differences do not add value to the organisation, or they are not accepted for their differences, then their perception to the extent that they think that they fit is likely to be low.

Being the same or like others, however, is a better predictor of fit than complementary fit. It is similarity that has the more significant effect. Such a result is supported by the Cable & Edwards study of (2004). In that study, data from 963 adult employees ranging from labourers to executives were used to test three alternative conceptual models that examined the complementary and supplementary traditions. Results indicated that “complementary and supplementary fit are interrelated but that both contribute independently to outcomes” (Cable & Edwards, 2004:830) and that although a good match of needs against supplies is a good thing, there is no adverse effect on employees when and if they receive too much of organisational supplies such as altruism, prestige and peer relationships. The surmise to be made is that oversupply is a good thing for the individual.

As far as the two streams within the PE fit paradigm of supplementary and complementary fit are concerned, the opinion is that these two types of fit, though interrelated, exist independently of one another (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof, 1996). In organisational terms, the ideal it would seem is to select people for complementary fit for knowledge and skills, but supplementary fit for values and personality to match in with the existing attributes of organisational members. The following section starts by examines the different dimensions within an organisation (environment), as well as their level of hierarchy and importance.
2.4 Levels and dimensions of fit

We now know that overall fit is important because “neither people nor situations are one-dimensional” (Caldwell, Chatman, & O’Reilly, 2007:357). However, we do not know about whether all internal and external dimensions of fit have been identified and how they fit together to influence behaviour (Billsberry, Ambrosini, Moss-Jones, & Marsh, 2005; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006). In the PE fit relationship, the person is categorised through several variables such as personality traits, abilities, skills, knowledge, values, goals, or preferences, etc. The organisational environment is made up of several domains, such as job (PJ), group (PG), vocation (PV), organisation (PO) (Kristof, 1996) or dyadic (PP) (Van Vianen, 2000).

As already mentioned research into fit has developed over the last thirty years beyond that of just seeking fit of a person's essential skills and abilities to the defined requirements of specific jobs, to other dimensions and hierarchical levels within the ‘E’. Fit studies, therefore, look at these different levels and subtypes on the premise that one aspect of a person could match well with an aspect of an organisational situation, but they might have other characteristics that do not match up so well in the same situation. Any measurements of fit or lack of fit, therefore, will be incomplete unless all attributes of both the person and the situation are taken into account in all-inclusive and pertinent terms (Chatman, 1989). So far, fit researchers have examined PE fit from a variety of perspectives, where the ‘E’ component is subdivided into different hierarchical levels of analysis such as the organisation, job and workgroups with further divisions at the dyadic level of fit, person to person/individual. I now review these domains.
Studies of fit in recent years acknowledge that fit is not a static dimension, in that conditions of fit are constantly changing as both entities P and E develop. They interrelate in different ways, influence and change over time, some with more impact than another. People are simultaneously nested in multiple dimensions of the environment, and when put together they partially make up a person’s total work experience (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; 193 Talbot & Billsberry, 2010). The principal dimensions used within fit are those presented by (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005) after their meta-analysis: fit with the organisation, [person-organization (PO fit)], fit with the vocation, [person-vocation (PV fit)], fit with job [person-job (PJ fit)], fit with group [person-group (PG fit) (Kristof, 1996) and fit between people [person to person (PP fit)]. All original conceptions are drawn from (Lewin, 1935 and 1951:240) field theory. He postulated that behaviour is the product of person (P) and environment (E) in what he called the ‘“totality of coexisting facts”’. The ‘umbrella’ view of PE fit includes various and separate aspects (Sekiguchi, 2007) over which there is a continuing discussion over which would be the best combination of dimensions to recruit for and develop. The most widely studied and foundation component of the fit field is that of person-organisation (PO) fit.

2.4.1 Person-organisation (PO) fit

Kristof (1996) provides the most commonly accepted definition of PO fit, which is about the compatibility between people’s values and those of the entire organisation which also considers the needs supply and demands ability perspectives. So that (a.) at least one entity provides what the other needs, (b.) they share similar fundamental characteristics or (c.) both. Strong PO fit is frequently based on the high level of congruence between a person’s values and
those of the organisation, a construct first proposed by Chatman, (1989) as being important because of commitment, satisfaction and retention, as well as superior job and organisational performance that occurs.

On the person side (P), research in the fit discipline suggests that a good fit of personal and organisational values leads to outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment and retention (Chatman, 1989; O’Reilly et al., 1991). Where values are understood to be “general beliefs about the normatively desirable behaviours or end states” (Edwards & Cable, 2009:655). At a more personal level Rokeach, (1973) presents values as something that is inherent in people, and around fundamental beliefs of what is right or wrong; and translate into work values within an organisational environment. The intrinsic values of an organisation are displayed through the culture of the organisation, in the behaviours of the most salient people within, because as Schneider's ASA theory, (1987) professes ‘people make the place’. High levels of PO fit translate into increased citizen behaviours, a shared sense of corporate community and values amongst co-workers as well as trust (Andrews, Baker, & Hunt, 2011; Boon & Hartog, 2011). On the other hand, Cable & DeRue (2002:882) say that “when an employee does not share the values of his or her organization, he or she is less likely to identify with the organization, less trusting of the organization’s motives, less willing to help the organization with extra-role contributions, and less likely to stay with the organization”. That sentiment coheres with Schneider’s 1987 ASA framework and the third component, of attrition.

2.4.2 Person-job (PJ) fit

Requirements for a job or task as best matched to the essential skills and abilities of an individual was termed in early fit literature as person-job (PJ) fit.
Later research opinion though, posed that matching up just for a job was insufficient and that other dimensions should also be taken into account such as PO fit, and person-group (PG) fit (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991; Kristof, 1996). These opinions were based on the premise that positive outcomes come from good PJ fit such as job satisfaction (0.56) with high correlations arising from good PO fit upon job satisfaction (0.44), (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005). My study here is showing that people seek to do a decent job and to be seen as suitable above others to keep it and stay in employment, secondly, to be viewed as fitting in with others in the context of person-group (PG) to keep the job. The most critical dimension after PJ fit is PG fit.

2.4.3 Person-group (PG) fit

Attraction to, and desire to be part of a group are universal features of human social life, and as put forward by (Hogg & Turner, 1985) is an essential factor to consider when studying human behaviour in the workplace. In the attraction phase of Schneider's ASA framework, he theorised that people were attracted to organisations which have similar attributes to themselves. On a social basis, this holds true and is carried through to organisational groups or teams.

Fit with workgroup is usually assessed as a direct perception of fit with a work team. More specifically it is, “the compatibility between individuals and their work groups” (Kristof, 1996:7). Through a supplementary fit lens, this could be from the perspective of a single characteristic such as values, personalities or abilities, and as such at a deep level within the psychological make-up of a person. Compatibility to the group gives support to positive self-esteem "and enables a self-identity (social identity theory, Tajfel & Turner, 1979)to be constructed in keeping with the group's expectations or
discriminations (Hogg & Turner, 1985). PG fit becoming more salient along with the person-environment (PE) dimension as the length of tenure increases, and a person becomes well established in the organisation (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Schneider et al., 1995). PG fit therefore only becomes relevant and essential in the post-hire period.

PG fit can also be looked at from a complementary fit viewpoint where people are selected for fit based on their capabilities, as would be common in project teams or those under matrix management, where there is a common purpose (Kristof, 1996; Jee Young Seong & Kristof-Brown, 2012). People do not exist in a vacuum around any one dimension of fit, the following [person to vocation (PV) fit] included. Although each one is conceptually separate and distinct they exist, as empirical evidence shows, as often highly correlated perceptions (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005). Groups are often formed on many different bases, so interpersonal attraction cannot and will not always take place; instead, it can be mediated by an identification process, as is the case with the formation of project groups for personality types over and above the KSAs. Such as by the personality dimension of agreeableness (McCrae & Costa, 1987) where people high on this trait are inclined to think of others. For those high on other characteristics such as conscientiousness, there is a drive to be self-reliant, dependable and goal achieving which sits better with (individual) person-job (PJ) fit or within an organisation (PV) that requires that trait.

The person-group fit dimension does not exist in isolation within an organisational environment, it is nested with others that have been found to support a sense of someone's fit once in tenure, as based on the conceptual work of Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) and shown in Figure 1 Jansen and Kristof-
Brown's (2006) higher order multi-dimensional PE fit showing long-term tenure relationships. These authors conceptualised five different fit dimensions, person-vocation (PV), person-organisation (PO), person-group (PG), person-job (PJ), and person to person (PP). These represent multi-dimensional fit and go towards making up a person's all-encompassing sense of fit. (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010). The dimensions will also have different salience to the person ‘P’ depending on where the ‘P’ is in their employment life cycle.

In Edwards and Billsberry’s (2010) empirical evidence from data already gathered from previous studies (Billsberry et al., 2008) was used to identify fifteen further dimensions of fit over and above those of Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) and used in a survey. The purpose was to identify any correlations or differences, an overarching sense of fit and to whether perceptions of such came from certain aspects in the organisational environment and their perceived values. Of interest is that the highest level of perceived fit (0.97) from the diagram at Figure 2 Multidimensional model of person-environment fit comes from PG fit with co-workers which is coming out strongly in my data and discussed at section Fit to the group - (PG) fit – need for as an influencer.
2.4.4 Person-vocation (PV) fit

As the title suggests this is not just about people but the nature of the work field itself, that is, the vocation where each class of occupations has different values sets and people self-select into an organisation that has similar value sets to their own (Holland, 1985; Schneider, 1987). Schneider's ASA model is based on the principle that people do not randomly select organisations to work for nor do those institutions randomly select people just to do a job. Each party looks to find an element of ‘fit’ between their values, attitudes and personality because positive outcomes would follow (Schneider, 1987). Schneider originally talked about ‘attraction’ in the context of the work by (Gottfredson et al., 1993; Holland, 1959, 1973, 1976) and his Vocational Choice Theory which looked to match

Notes: OV = Organizational Values, TCE = Terms and Conditions of Employment, OGD = Opportunities for Growth and Development, PWE = Physical Working Environment, RE = Relationship, IB = Individual Behavior, SK = Skills and Knowledge, NW = Nature of Work, CO = Colleagues, VOC = Vocation. The arrows in this diagram leading to the five forms of fit are in the opposite direction to the hypothesized models to reflect that in this study these are independent latent, rather than observed, variables. This way of displaying latent variables is in accordance with guidance from Law et al., (1998).
peoples’ personalities to work environments so that personal level job success and satisfaction would ensue.

According to Holland’s theory, there are six types of vocational personality (with empirical evidence over the last forty years showing these as remaining steadfast and in common use), and that people should seek careers to best match their personalities. Because such choices would support people to function at their highest potential and achieve the greatest job satisfaction. Schneider loosely took Holland’s theory, along with evidence from (Tom, 1971) from organisational literature straight to an individual level, proposing that ‘attraction’ was about fit between personal and organisational characteristics, without specifying what these were. Later papers, however, articulate these as congruence with the goals, values, process, structure and culture (personality) of the organisation (O’Reilly et al., 1991; Schneider et al., 1995). Subsequent empirical work by Billsberry (2004) looking at the values of 621 job applicants contradicts the previous findings which suggest those job applicants in the ‘attraction’ phase to an organisation because of its characteristics, but they do so on the basis that they seek a specific type of work. The fit is only considered when there is a choice between organisations of the same vocational kind, for example, when an accountant has a choice between two firms, A or B; only then will applicants look more closely at the perceived fit between their personality and that of the organisation.

Nonetheless, it is assumed that people and organisations start by being attracted to one another with the intention that both parties seek fit, but that is in an ideal economic world where there is a plethora of choice. Consider that, in dire financial climes, in times of limited job choice from the applicant’s perspective
and from an organisational standpoint where there is an insufficient supply of specific skill sets, then complete fit is a luxury and not a high-ranking selection criterion. Perceived or actual misfit or lack of fit is likely therefore to occur right from the start, but perhaps often overlooked, downplayed, or even faked during the selection stage. Due in no small part as Wheeler (2011) mentions, other needs are in play such as the need for any job in a depressed economy and ‘fit' therefore is a luxury. To play the game of compliance with whatever the organisation requires to get and keep a job becomes paramount (Worrall, 2011).

2.4.5 Person to person (PP) fit

Fit that occurs at an individual level of analysis and which includes any dyadic fit such as person-individual as a co-worker (Adkins, Ravlin, & Meglino, 1996) or in a person-supervisor fit mode. It represents fit at one of the hierarchical levels within the PE fit domain, where an individual can fit in at different levels, such as to supervisor, the job, group or organisation (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007a). Congruence is sought by an individual in another individual around personality, attitudes and values, that is, because of interpersonal similarity (Van Vianen, 2000), and corresponds to the similarity-attraction hypothesis. There is also a holistic approach to take as posed by the following review of ‘spill over and spiralling'.

2.5 Spill over and Spiralling

Jansen and Kristof-Brown’s (2006) framework, the multidimensional model of Person-Environment (PE) fit is a way of looking at people’s interactions with different aspects of the work environment and seeking to identify and measure where ‘fit’ or lack of fit internal to that environment occurs.
Because, as is represented in Figure 3 Jansen and Kristof-Brown’s (2006) - multidimensional model of Person-Environment (PE) people do not only interact with one part of the work environment at any one time, but they also do so across multiple levels simultaneously. People can experience fit and the constructive outcomes such as satisfaction, commitment as well as the positive aspects of stress (eustress) in some dimensions and use that sense of fit to overcome areas where they experience lack of fit. In a process which Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006:12271) referring the work of Schein, 1986 they label as salience. “A measure of the relevance or importance of each of the dimensions of fit, as determined by an individual’s personality and values or environmental differences such as the size and structure of the organisation as well as the strength of its culture”.

An example of varying fit might be that a person might be facing a lack of fit with their job (PJ) and that the person would consider investing their remaining resources elsewhere. Through a construct put forward by Kristof-Brown and Jansen (2007) this is ‘spill over’ into other salient dimensions, so to
increase the fit there and compensate for any misfit. The concept works for fit as well through a construct they call ‘spiralling’ which is put forward as a process of mutual reinforcement, where feelings of fitting in generate further feelings of a good fit. They argue that the process also works in reverse with negative feelings of fit creating a deeper sense of poor fit. To follow Schneider's 1987 ASA framework, this could mean that a person might consider that if they don't fit with an aspect such as the group (PG), it will lead them to think that they misfit in other dimensions as well and consider looking to leave the organisation (Schneider, 1987). Or, as suggested by other researchers to indulge in behaviours that are counterproductive, or to find niches to hide away in (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Van Vianen & Stoelhorst, 2007a).

An organisational objective is to build upon and consolidate the initial fit as identified in the selection process. The reason being is because, as previously explained, good ‘fit’ is beneficial for the organisation and the individual. Due to the constructive outcomes such as personal satisfaction, positive work attitudes and performance (Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof, 1996; Tom, 1971; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). However, as time progresses, the complex issue of fit and misfit is very much dependent on the interactions between a range of personal, organisational, situational and contextual factors, further complicated by each interaction-taking place at a different hierarchical level. Also, interaction between the person and these different levels produce different outcomes. Because of the view that behaviour from interactions between the P and the E will vary, depending on the individuals’ nature of the engagement with each subtype within the environment E. As well as often going on simultaneously with one another (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Kristof-Brown, Jansen, & Colbert,
2002). Just because the person ‘P’ and environment ‘E’ are in play, it needs all their attributes in a constellation of interactions to produce outcomes, and to cohere says Schneider (2001). To agree with Lewin's, (1935:73) proposition that behaviour (B) is the function (f) of person (P) and environment (E) B= f (P, E).

Some fit researchers treat the environment as devoid of people or at least separate to them. Whereas, because I am coming from a constructivist epistemology, I follow Schneider's (2001) viewpoint that an organisational environment is not a static measurable. Moreover, in fit research, environments are conceptualised as a function of the attributes of the people in them, and it is they that need to be identified and as far as PE fit is concerned, to be appraised. To achieve an organisational goal – to satisfy "employees' physical and emotional needs because only then would employees be willing to give up their services wholeheartedly to the organisation and perform up to their potential ”Argyris, 1964; Likert, 1961; McGregor, 1960 as cited in (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007).

2.6 External dimensions

A person’s sense of fit or misfit does not just emanate from the work environment. The world of work occupies only one-third of a person's ecosystem, and there will always be complementary or opposing forces that will go towards a view of fit outside of the organisational situation. The forces at play come from a person's connections to essential parts of their ecosystem such as family, friends, community as well as the many dimensions and relationships within their workplace; and the interactions, conflicts, spill overs between them. People do not only interact with one part of their environment; they do so at the same time across several dimensions. A term for this new construct, introduced by Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, in 2001 is ‘job embeddedness’. This is a concept
that considers the strength and influence of a person's links to off the job as well as on the job factors in the context of their intent to turnover. The term ‘job embeddedness’ was developed because of extensive individual interviews, focus groups, and surveys of 177 individuals showing that there are six dimensions covering people’s 1. links to other people, teams, and groups, 2. perceptions of their fit with job, organisation, and community, and 3. what they say they would have to sacrifice if they left their jobs, influences their intention to turnover. The strength of the links to the social capital and especially off-the-job factors (p.1116), along with the high emotional and financial cost of disentangling from what the authors describe as a net or web often prompts an individual to stay.

A possible ‘misfit' situation and feelings can, therefore, be avoided or subsumed because the individual may be so enmeshed within their unique and overall job embeddedness construct that where they may think of leaving or feeling affected by perceived negative ‘shocks to the system' those aspects are buffered or diluted. Maybe not enough though in the face of significant changes as next discussed.

2.6.1 Changing dimensions

Research over the last ten years in PE fit has looked at a person’s sense of fit when the work environment alters in the face of economic crisis, mergers and acquisitions, downsizing, upscaling, new management, and firm structures (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof-Brown et al., 2002). Wheeler (2005) posits that employees re-assess fit in responses to individual instances. For instance, it is generally accepted that from a self-centred ‘hedonistic’ motivation viewpoint, people will continually adapt their behaviour to fit with the organisational environment. To maintain and increase their sense of well-being that comes from
a positive affective state (Kashdan, Rose, & Fincham, 2004; Lazurus & Folkman, 1984). It matches in well with an organisation’s "desire that people will adapt to changes with minimum disruption" (Caldwell et al., 2004:1); and to Chatman's (1989) statement about PO fit that it is a dynamic process, rather than just a result.

Just because you fit today may not mean that you fit tomorrow, complex dynamics are at play, and this is where the interactions between the different and multi-dimensions of the environment would be considered (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987; Wheeler, 2010). Much in the same way that a person’s perception of the state or level of their misfit is under constant re-assessment as time in employment progresses. With Taris & Feij, (2001) emphasising that people's perceived fit changes in different ways as a working career progresses. It becomes, they say, more accurate over time because people become more cognizant of their characteristics as well of those of the organisation.

Fit as discussed above is multidimensional. There are also multi-levels of fit posit Ostroff and Schulte, (2007), which at the individual level they term ‘compositional fit’ or ‘compilational fit’. Fit in whichever form occurs at the lower levels of the dyadic, such as person to job (PJ), person to person, (PP), going up through a hierarchy to person-group/teams (PG) then to the higher level of the organisation (PO). If there is compositional fit, it means that a situation is made up at the lower levels by the same type of characteristics that have ‘converged and coalesced' to produce a higher-level outcome. Whereas compilational fit is about different amounts or kinds of characteristics, such as complementary rather than similar personalities, from two of the lower levels
combining in such a way that complement and fit with each other to produce the higher level outcome (Billsberry et al., 2011; Ostroff & Schulte, 2007a).

A sense of fit or misfit is also the result of a complex web of interactions and forces. A dominant fit in one or more salient aspect of the five sub-dimensions of fit (PV, PO, PJ, PP and PG) could well improve a feeling of a misfit in another. A person facing an unplanned negative changing situation, say in connection to their job is likely; to preserve their self-concept, engage in the process of cognitive dissonance and compartmentalisation. These actions result in dampening down the negativity of the event by spreading it across the other positive sub-dimensions which act “to alleviate the discomfort associated with the negative thoughts” (Wheeler et al., 2005:285). So, where a negative impact on a person’s job which might cause them to reassess their sense of fit or to consider leaving, can be overcome and coheres with (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007) construct of ‘spill over' within multidimensional fit.

The person’s self-esteem is also maintained together with the good feelings that go with it. Cognitive resources expended on considering whether they fit in or not and what can be done about it can also be conserved (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). We know then that the sub-dimensions of fit mentioned here intersect with a person’s sense of their self-concept which according to social researchers (Markus, 1987) is a “dynamic interpretive structure that mediates most significant intrapersonal processes “and is said to be one of the most significant regulators of behaviour.

Organisations vie with one another to employ the best of people’s unique personal knowledge, essential skills and abilities to drive superior economic, competitive advantage. There is therefore considerable interest in how to select
and satisfy both elements of the needs-supply equation to keep talented people and keep them committed to achieving organisational goals. How can management deal with the challenge of managing the harmonious fit of people within the organisation notwithstanding the diversity of ethnicity, age, and educational background? Continuing studies in PE fit are starting to show that lack of fit is displaying adverse outcomes such as psychological and physiological stress in the person, disruption behaviours and intent to turnover (Pervin, 1968; Wheeler et al., 2007).

2.7 Summary of PE fit

As previously mentioned, ‘fit’ is based on assessing with two variables, the ‘person' (P) and the organisational ‘environment' (E), the results of which are then combined to create a single index. Exact fit only occurring when there is congruence between commensurate P and E variables. We do not know for sure what dimensions people consider as important as far as their fit and misfit perceptions are concerned. One aspect of a person could match well with a point of a situation, but they might have other dimensions that don't match up so well in the same position or interaction. Any measurements of fit or lack of fit, therefore, will be incomplete unless all attributes of both the person and the situation are taken into account in complete and pertinent terms (Chatman, 1989; Harrison, 2007; Ostroff & Schulte, 2007a). In short, the characteristics and dimensions of fit so far identified in either of the complementary or supplementary flavours might not be the same for misfit, and it follows therefore that the misfit term needs to be conceptualised in its own right.

We read that in the person-environment (PE) fit field researchers are starting to look at what people feel like if they misfit at work, but little is known,
and research is in its infancy. Qualitative, exploratory analysis is particularly
called for to understand how people experience misfit at work and the possible
multi-dimensions that may be in play (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007, 2008). Such an
approach would provide a solid base for misfit research which is not something
that has been historically shared by research in the PE fit field. PE fit researchers’
still face critical challenges in characterising the two variables, people (P) and
their work environments (E) and comparing them in meaningful ways. Together
with understanding the complex multidimensional nature of the interactions
between the two (Caldwell, Chatman, & O’Reilly, 2007; Harrison & Sin, 2007;
Wheeler, 2010). The field is also hampered by weak paradigm development and
controversy over what to measure and how. With academics such as Judge,
(2007:433) saying that “most would agree that fit as a field is so weakly
developed that we see disagreements even as to the scope of the field”. There is a
danger that research into misfit could well go the same way, built on shaky
methodologies with fuzzy boundaries and scope.

That is not to say that what we know from the PE literature such as
obtaining what Wheeler, (2010b) describes as useful anchors can't be ignored. It
is that this frame of reference cannot be just transferred into an understanding of
misfit. To perhaps mistakenly look upon misfit as opposite to fit and on a
continuum (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007). Because recent studies by Billsberry et al.
2005; Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) and Talbot (2011) are indicating that fit and
misfit are separate positions and that people do not slip from one state to another
or back again. Instead, that misfit is an absolute. I explore misfit in part 3 of the
literature review, but before then I will review the measures of PE fit.
2.8 Measures of fit – part 2b

For fit researchers adopting a quantitative approach it is important to separate the person (P) and the organisational environment (E). They calculate the goodness of fit by looking at the discrepancy between (P) and (E), (Caplan, 1987; Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). The goodness of fit or lack of it has a positive or negative influence on some work-related behaviours and attitudes. For outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment to the organisation, turnover intention, performance and stress (De Cooman et al., 2010; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005) and thus of interest to industrial organisation psychologists.

The literature review presented here is part two of three, which will examine the approaches to measuring PE fit and the content dimensions of the person and environment used to assess it. The most suitable measures depend on how the fit relationship has been conceptualised: as an exact correspondence, commensurate compatibility, or as a general compatibility. Then, there are two main approaches as dominant in the literature, either direct or indirect (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005; Ostroff, 2007) the choice depending on the type of measure used. These apply to two types of fit, objective and subjective/perceived fit. That is, based on a scale of measures presented by an aggregate of others to represent the environment (E) as assessed subjectively by the person (P). Or secondly, directly measured from a perceived viewpoint, where a sense of fit is a cognitive construct (Edwards, Caplan, & Van Harrison, 1998). I focus on these two measures, direct and indirect, which have profoundly influenced fit research to date.
2.9 Direct measures of perceived fit

Perceived or subjective fit is based on a person’s (P) perception of fit between their values and as those of the organisation (O) in which they work and usually measured directly by asking them to estimate the perceived PO fit. Values and priorities of the individual, when matched against those of the organisation, is often used to measure and indicate a level of fit (or not). Good fit as we know is sought because people are happier, more productive and likely to stay as well as having beliefs about agency effectiveness and perceptions of conflict (Ostroff, Shin, & Kinicki, 2005; Ravlin & Ritchie, 2006). Direct measures of fit are commonly used where fit is viewed as a commensurate or general compatibility. In that, the people under study are explicitly asked to report on the level of fit that they think that they have within the organisation and is defined as “*the match between P and E as they are perceived and reported by P*” (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010:25). It is a person’s subjective assessment of how well they perceive themselves to fit in with specific characteristics of the work environment.

Those were different dimensions (previous chapter) such as another person, job, supervisor, group, organisation or vocation. It is a person’s sense of compatibility that is measured (Cable & Judge, 1997; Ostroff, 2007b) and is usually around people’s impression of how well they fit in with aspects of the organisation itself, or with the job. To determine those assessments employees are asked direct questions such as “*How well do you think you fit in the organisation?*” or “*How well do your skills match the requirements of your job?*” (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010:26). The questions are on Likert scales of varying ranges, of usually around 3-5 items. To address other characteristics such as values, culture, personality to name but a few, and is demonstrated by a single
predictor variable. For use then in a regression equation (estimating the relationships among variables) or analysis of variance (determining the degree of difference or similarity between two or more groups) (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007:137).

Measuring fit from this direct perceived approach has in recent years (Edwards et al., 2006) moved on to being described as a molar approach. To “assess perceptions of PE fit that combine the person and environment and disregard the direction of their difference, treating positive and negative discrepancies as equivalent in terms of PE misfit” (Edwards et al., 2006:803). It is a direct measure of perceived fit and can demonstrate either commensurate on general compatibility depending on whether particular dimensions of a person or environmental attributes are specified. Perceived fit is now further discussed from the perspective of molar fit.

2.9.1 Molar fit

Perceived fit also called molar fit, so named in recent years by Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, (2006). Respondents are asked to report an overall assessment of the fit between themselves and their organisation. People already have mental pictures of the organisation’s profile and will examine in their heads the extent of the congruence between their characteristics and the organisation’s profile, and so able to answer questions about different forms of fit. For these direct measures, each person under study is asked to separately report their sense of fit through questionnaires or other such structured instruments. It is also an individual level measurement because individual people are asked directly to explain “how well do you think that your characteristics (P) fit in with your employing organisation's (E) characteristics”? (Kristof-Brown &
Jansen, 2007; Verquer et al., 2003). “To what degree do your values, goals, and personality ‘match’ or fit this organisation and the current employees in this organisation?” (Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Cable, 1997). Fit can also be measured from both a supplementary and complementary actualisation, (Saks & Ashforth, 2002).

A molar approach, together with those of atomistic and molecular (Edwards et al., 2006) represents a move away from a reductionist approach to measurement, where aspects such as human behaviour are viewed in the context of being made up of parts, of elements, which can be scientifically determined. Towards more of a Gestalt (humanistic) methodology, and is about a person’s own psychological experience of what makes up fit/misfit for them. The terms also consider how, and by whom measurements of the P and the E are done. As demonstrated using particular direct questions, depending on what type of fit is being studied, demand-ability, needs-supply, complementary or supplementary. Subjective fit can also be viewed through a complementary fit lens in what Edwards et al., 2006 label as the molecular approach.

2.9.2 Molecular fit

This approach is about measuring the perceived discrepancy between the person and aspects of the work environment with questions asked that address demands of the job against abilities (Edwards et al., 2006). In the context of job demands exceeding those abilities (work overload) or where the capabilities of a role are below those of the person (employed). A molecular approach is rarely used in the context of PE fit studies but follows in the perceived fit application and “reflects the conceptualization of fit as commensurate
compatibility” (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010:35). The second approach to measuring fit is indirectly.

2.10 Indirect measurement - Objective/actual fit

In the indirect measurement of fit, the focus is on the separate assessment of the P and E factors (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Ostroff & Schulte, 2007a). The measurement of the environment ‘E’ is determined by either the same person across both dimensions or by an objective, thus independent other. Objective fit measures involve asking someone to describe their characteristics (usually values) and then someone else, usually someone who knows the organisational environmental well, to describe it along the same dimensions. It is described as objective fit because, as put forward by (French, Rogers, & Cobb, 1974) it is possible to measure ‘actual’ fit on the premise that it is possible to draw measures of the person and the environment outside of a person’s perception. Also, by assessing the E independently of the person, P ‘subjective biases as well as response bias problems’ can be minimised (Edwards et al., 1998; Ostroff, 2007a).

These indirect measures towards assessing fit have also been called by Edwards et al., (2006) atomistic fit, to highlight the fact that separate assessments of the person and the environment are being carried out.

The descriptions as objectively provided are used as a basis on which a fit measure between employees or potential employees and the organisation is constructed. People are then asked to rank these measures in their order of importance to them, with the level of fit is taken as an intra-individual correlation between the measures (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010; Verquer et al., 2003). The measures typically used to calculate this difference score are discussed further at section 2.11. Atomistic fit takes on a
different description depending on who measures the environment. In that case, it is the person reporting on the P and E or with the E being assessed by another person within the organisation, and this indirect measurement from the perceived indirect fit (subjective indirect fit) as now discussed.

2.10.1 Perceived indirect fit - Subjective indirect fit

Indirect assessment can be done in two ways with the individual taking both the P and E measures or, by others reporting on the measures of the ‘E’. Firstly, people are asked to report separately on their (P) characteristics as well as those they perceive in the environment (E), usually at separate points in time Kristof-Brown and Jansen (2007). They are described as indirect measures of perceived fit, so called because represent a person’s view of the environment ready for researchers’ calculations into a measure of fit (usually through polynomial regression, same as objective fit) rather than a conclusive view of that fit. This measure of fit was labelled by Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, and Shipp, (2006) as atomistic, in which the P and E are measured separately but by the same source. The fit is viewed as either an exact correspondence or a commensurate compatibility.

The subjective viewpoint is favoured when looking at the E because of the more interactional aspect of what is happening/has already happened rather than objective approach as to what is desired (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010). For that reason, these measures are also described as ‘indirect measures of perceived fit’. This is somewhat at odds with (Arthur, Bell, Villado, & Doverspike, 2006) who commented on the move towards indirect rather than direct measures of calculating fit in the person-organisation (PO) fit dimension to reduce same-source bias.
That being said, the subjective fit is viewed from different personal perspectives. There are differences as to what type of fit is looked at because people do not view demands-abilities fit (whether a person's capabilities are suited to the job/role) and needs-supply (what the employee sees as the role providing for their needs) from the same perspective (Caplan, 1987). Additionally, these ‘atomistic’ types of fit are useful because they facilitate examination of specific attitudinal variables from the smallest components, often in the context of job satisfaction, turnover intentions, stress Edwards and Cooper, (1990) to name but a few (Edwards et al., 2006).

2.10.2 Criticism of direct and indirect measurement of fit

Direct measurement of people's experience of how they view their fit is not without its criticism. Are the questions asked of people the ‘right ones’ that can translate their sense of fit or misfit? In this regard, the use of correlations is criticised in extant research on the basis that indices used “reflect similarity in profile shape but not additional potentially important information…”(Arthur, Bell, Villado, & Doverspike, 2006: 789). Fit studies from whatever ‘view’ (objective, subjective or perceived) show that people are very much aware of their level of fit with an organisation as a whole, or to particular dimensions within it. It found that people were not actively aware of their fit when they fit well but when and if they become a misfit the adverse effects on self and the organisation is of concern. Which is at odds with criticism as exemplified by Harrison, and quoted in Judge, (2007: 433 “that direct measures of fit (meaning overall perceptions of fit) are so meaningless as to deserve abolishment from the literature”.
Direct measurements of perceived fit are not the only things under fire. It is the aspect of perceived fit itself; with Harrison (2007) saying that fit itself is no more than a general attitude towards an organisation. It is aspects such as overall job attitude made up of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, (as constructed in someone’s mind from both an emotional and psychological perspective) that are the major influences to work behaviours [not fit] (Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006). Harrison (2007) poses an argument that direct perceptions of fit could serve as additional indicators to the broad job attitude factor, and that’s all. An opinion in part supported by Ostroff, (2007:353) who says that “direct measures of fit are ‘….in some ways analogous to other measures of affective responses to the organisational situation (e.g., job satisfaction) in that it captures an overall subjective or affective reaction to the contextual environment’”. These opinions fly in the face of a central assumption within fit theories that it is the congruence of the P and the E variables that go towards a sense of PE fit , and that it is a significant predictor of work outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, tenure, employee well-being and vocational choice (Kristof, 1996; Spokane, 1985; Taris & Feij, 2001).

Moreover, measures are subject to a common method, single source bias (e.g. Verquer et al., 2003). This limitation notwithstanding several fit studies do use direct measures of subjective fit because they have demonstrated that they are good indicators of several attitudinal outcomes, such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Better than indirect measures of subjective fit, followed by indirect measures of objective fit (Arthur et al., 2006; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005). An overview of the measures used is now presented.
2.11 Measures of fit - Organisational culture profile (OCP)

To measure the degree of fit two main measures are used. The first is to use a values-based instrument, the organisational culture profile (OCP) made up of 54 value statements, since revised to include only 40 values, and that is descriptive rather than desired (Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Cable, 1997; O'Reilly et al., 1991). Through a Q-sort method (Block, 1978) aspects of the organisation are rated by people, such as top managers and key informants within the organisation and ranked in order through the use of a 54 or 40-item card sort. They will "contain a set of value statements that can be used then to ideographically assess both the extent to which certain values characterize a target organization and an individual's preference for that particular configuration of values" (O'Reilly et al., 1991: 494).

These categories in the original form (O'Reilly, 1991) used to determine organisational culture range across eight dimensions innovation, attention to detail, outcome orientation, aggressiveness, supportiveness, emphasis on rewards, team orientation, and decisiveness (Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Sarros, Gray, & Densten, 2003). The result is a value profile that characterises the desired P. The people under study are then asked to sort the statements into a rank order from their point of view, into categories that reflect desirable to least desirable. Results are then subject to factor analysis to identify clusters or groups of related items. Also, to demonstrate any correlation between personal profiles, calculated to show similar/common viewpoints or segments of subjectivity that exist. An ideographic ranking of values for each respondent is shown when compared to the default value profile. The list of ranked values would have been compiled by crucial people of the organisation to represent the aggregate ‘E’ determining the
norms and values of an organisation. Then used to assess the values of an interviewee or employee (Block, 1978; Chatman, 1991; Chatman, Caldwell, & O’Reilly, 1999). Comparing an individual’s OCP profile for their ideal organisation with his or her view of the actual organisation’s profile shows the individual’s level of fit with the latter (Billsberry, 2004). More recent versions of the OCP do not use the Q-sort methodology.

An additional approach to measuring fit is by asking third parties about their sense of someone else’s fit, but this objective appraisal of fit has shaky conclusions as highlighted by (Billsberry et al., 2004; Edwards et al., 1998) because it bears little relationship to the fit perceived by the person(s) under study. It could well be according to Schneider (1983) that people's assessments of others and situations are very much influenced by pre-formed assumptions and judgments they already held in their heads and based on their relationships with other (unconnected) people. Billsberry (2004:3) suggests therefore that “it may be prudent to use methods that focus on the respondent's sense of fit, rather than the observations of a third party”. Fit and misfit researchers are left with indirect measures of fit that involve so far looking at an index of fit or misfit through correlation.

2.12 Polynomial regression

A second approach to looking at actual fit is to use polynomial regression as data analysis or statistical technique to derive a calculation of fit (Edwards, 1991, 1994). It overcomes the restriction of “looking only at the d squared...”(squared difference between two component measures) (Edwards, 1994:52) approach to studying fit and misfit through the indirect measures of the profile similarity indices (PSI). The main criticism of which is “their inability to assess value
similarity on each dimension independently” (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998: 364), being based on unverified assumptions (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993). To also overcome collapsing person and environment fit measures into a single score that ‘captures' fit or misfit which is also hindered by the ipsative (a forced-choice scale) nature of the profile data (Ostroff, 2007b). PSIs had also failed to examine the main effects contributions to the behaviour of the person variables – as well as their interaction (Schneider, 2007). The use of polynomial regression overcomes these limitations. The method uses separate measures of P and E and its associated higher order terms as the predictor variables. Moreover, by using polynomial regression through a response surface methodology, the relationship between the person P and the environment E can be more specifically modelled. The three-dimensional surfaces correspond to the polynomial regression techniques and were introduced by Edwards and Parry, (1993: 1578) as an answer to “avoiding problems with difference scores”. The application of polynomial regression equations contains the separate P and E measures and the multi measures between them, and these are represented in the use of a three-dimensional surface plot (response surface) (Caldwell, Chatman, & O’Reilly, 2007; Edwards & Parry, 1993).

In their illustration of the polynomial regression and the response surface methodology Edwards and Parry (1993) and Edwards and Van Harrison (1993) used data from the classic PE fit study as carried out by French et al., (1982) that examined supplies values (SV) and demands ability (DA). The French et al., research had shown that subjective SV or DA misfit "would produce negative psychological, physiological, and behavioural outcomes, collectively labelled ‘strain'. The results indicated that strain might vary along the PE fit line indicated
as ‘misfit’. However, in the reanalysis of this data by Edwards and Harrison (1993), they showed that the use of difference-score measures of fit lead to conclusions that may be confusing. Thus, their proposal that it is the form of the relationship between P and E, and their affiliated higher order items that represent the concept of fit or misfit. It is necessary as Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010: 38) postulate to explore the relationships between these variables either through a visual examination of the surface graph of the links or further statistical calculations. This approach might go some way to finding an explanation as to why when P and E variables show exact congruence good positive outcomes such as job satisfaction does not necessarily follow. Indicating that the ‘dark side of good fit’, that is, too much supplementary fit (exact fit) has resulted in the negativity an excess of homogeneity can bring about (Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Stevens, 2005; Schneider et al., 1995).

As one can see, none of these measures goes towards explaining why there is a misfit between variables and provides no explanation towards defining what misfit is. Moreover, no insight is given as to how and why perceive themselves to fit in or misfit with the organisational environment, that is from a psychological perspective. That being said, there is a quantitative measure that goes some way towards applying similarity metrics, that of cluster analysis.

2.13 Cluster analysis

Other quantitative techniques that can be used to gather information about fit variables, and in simultaneous environments are those of cluster analysis. It is a statistical technique that is used to collect inferences about sub clusters or different type sets of people or settings and the meaningful variables common to each. Within PE fit studies, assumptions are made about the type and level of fit
of the cluster, that is, the group to which a person is similar to about “performance on measures held to reflect fit effects” and across groups (Mumford & Espejo, 2007). This method offers a way of developing more sophisticated models of fit processes and outcomes tailored to people’s unique characteristics, such as personality, life history and values as well as reflecting different environmental demands. To throw further light on the interactions and adaptations that go on for different people and within different environments. Cluster analysis, particularly for complementary fit the authors say offers a new methodology for PE fit research.

2.14 Conclusion of PE Fit measures

The terms used so far in this chapter have been handled differently by different authors, a highlighted by (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010b). Specifically, the work of (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Verquer et al., 2003) reversed the perceived and subjective labels. Fit research lacks structure and consistency in the methods used to measure the construct leading on to influence over the strength of results (Kristof-Brown, Barrick, et al., 2005; Kristof, 1996). With Verquer et al., (2003:475) stating that “...are quite different ways of measuring the same construct and any disparate results in previous research could easily be due to the way fit has been measured”. Fit measures are also often applied differently by fit scholars and do not help in making firm the PE fit construct which is built on unstable foundations that do not meet the tenants of a good theory, to specifying what, how, when and why (Edwards, 2008; Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). Stronger arguments around different types of PE fit can, as suggested by Edwards, (2008) go on to describe the form of the PE fit relationship. For example, the similarity between P and E factors can also be measured to indicate
the level of supplementary fit when the person's characteristics supplements or embellishes those already in the organisational environment, (Kristof, 1996).

Complementary fit could also be determined by considering the characteristics that the person possesses, and an organisation has need of such as task, knowledge, skills but is lacking from within, i.e. the people that already make up the E of its environment. The degree to which these demands are met by the characteristics of the person indicates demands-abilities fit (Edwards & Shipp, 2009; Kristof, 1996). Also, PE fit can also be assessed from the constructs of needs-supplies fit. In which the satisfaction of the employee should increase (and thus their sense of fit) when the supplies from the organisational environment expand to meet those needs (French et al., 1982). PE fit researchers still face critical challenges in characterising the two variables, people (P) and their work environments (E) and then comparing them in meaningful ways, as well as understanding the complex multidimensional nature of the interactions between the two (Caldwell, Chatman, & O’Reilly, 2007; Harrison & Sin, 2007; Wheeler, 2010). The field is also hampered by weak paradigm development and controversy over what to measure and how. With academics such as Judge, (2007:433) saying that “most would agree that fit as a field is so weakly developed that we see disagreements even as to the scope of the field”.

There is a danger that research into misfit could well go the same way, built on shaky methodologies with fuzzy boundaries and scope. That is not to say that what we know from the PE literature such as obtaining what Wheeler (2010b) describes as useful anchors can’t be ignored. It is that this frame of reference cannot be just transferred into an understanding of misfit. To mistakenly look upon misfit as opposite to fit and on a continuum (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007),
because recent studies Billsberry et al. 2005; Kristof-Brown et al., (2005) and Talbot (2011) indicate that fit and misfit are separate states and that people do not slip from one state to another or back again. Instead, that misfit is an absolute. What we do know so far is that people's perception of their fit or misfit is constructed within their heads and that they are "highly personal and idiosyncratic experiences" (Wheeler, 2010:2). The fit and misfit constructs could, indeed should, therefore be examined from the participants’ viewpoints and not from researchers’ constructs or terms in positivist approaches (Billsberry et al., 2011, 2005; Talbot & Billsberry, 2010). The study discussed here will be a qualitative, exploratory approach that seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of how people feel at work, and the behaviours they say that they exhibit so to build a picture of the psychological construct of ‘misfit’.

Furthermore, we do not know for sure what dimensions people consider as important as far as their fit and misfit perceptions are concerned. One aspect of a person could match well with a point of a situation, but they might have other dimensions that don't match up so well in the same case. Any measurements of fit or lack of fit, therefore, will be incomplete unless all attributes of both the person and the situation are taken into account in all-inclusive and pertinent terms (Chatman, 1989; Harrison, 2007; Ostroff & Schulte, 2007a). In short, the characteristics and dimensions of fit so far identified in either of the complementary or supplementary flavours might or not be the same for misfit. It follows therefore that the misfit term needs to be conceptualised in its own right. I present an overview of what we know about organisational misfit in the next part of this literature review chapter 2 (part c).
2.15 The importance of understanding organisational misfit

Organisations, we know, strive to find the most productive and flexible staff that they meet the increasing and changeable demands of the competitive macro environment (Da Silva, Hutcherson, & Wahl, 2010). They need a superior human capital resource (people) that can readily adapt to and add value to the organisation's products and processes and put the firm into a position of continuing competitive advantage (Grant, 1996; Ployhart, 2012). Extant research says that the people that are best for this situation are ones that have a good fit. In that, they fit in well with people already in the organisation and provide complementary fit (offer characteristics that are missing in the business, such as leadership, R&D capability, financial management). Higher levels of fit have positive outcomes such as higher levels of job performance and productive organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and reduced turnover, as well as higher levels of organisational commitment (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005; Ployhart, 2012; Verquer et al., 2003). However, what is not clear is what happens when there is a lack of fit or a mismatch of specific features, thus a feeling of misfit.

The most commonly known outcome of someone’s perceived lack of fit, as previously mentioned, is stress (Edwards, 2008). Leading to adverse psychological and physiological effects (Lefevre, Mathany, & Kolt, 2003); frustration, nervous breakdown, promotion side-lining, no career fulfilment, loss of job (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007, 2008). The ultimate ‘cure’, for people to rid themselves of these symptoms and psychological strain, is to exit the organisation and find work elsewhere, or as posited by various authors – where alternative work is unavailable people will hunker down, and find themselves a niche to hide
away in. This study does not look at stress unless mentioned in the data but seeks to identify other outcomes that are manifested as the result of people feeling that they are a misfit, which is looking to be a negative psychopathological state. To investigate the cause of negative feelings such as isolation and ostracism arising from interactions that may have previously offered a sense of fit or should be doing so.

PE fit theories postulate that people have an innate need to fit with the organisational environment (Piasentin & Chapman, 2007; Van Vianen & Stoelhorst, 2007) and the degree to which people do fit, from a perceptual viewpoint, is positively related to what people deem as important to them. When Schneider (1987) published his seminal paper on his Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model, he theorised that organisational homogeneity, because of similar people gathering together allows and facilitates coordination, communication and team working because of the many personal attributes they have in common. Moreover, he also suggested that for those people who subsequently found that their personality characteristics did not fit with the central values and norms of the organisation they will leave (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Schneider, 1987).

This is an action that is not always available for several reasons least of which there are no alternative opportunities in a restricted job market. So, the person stays within the organisation in the hope that things will change. If disaffected individuals can't leave they are theorised to stay on, “acting as centres of rebellion, disaffection and malcontent” (Billsberry, Ambrosini, Moss-Jones, & Marsh, 2005). Therefore having negative outcomes for teams or persons within them such as reduced job satisfaction and increased turnover (De Cooman et al.,
Too much of a mismatch between a person and their environment it is suggested can lead to a wide range of negative emotions and poor physical and mental health consequences as well. These negative feelings can also manifest as stress, (Caplan, Cobb, French, 1975; Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Fevre et al., 2003) and psychological strain (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999; French et al., 1982). With also the problems of frustration, nervous breakdown, promotion side-lining, no career fulfilment, and loss of job (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008). With “Burnout, cynicism about change, and dysfunctional effects of change on organisational commitment, turnover, morale, and performance seeming to be far more prevalent than accounts of people readily embracing change” (Caldwell et al., 2004:868).

2.15.1 Misfit

The term in the context of the person-environment research has recently been advanced as an essential area of study (Billsberry, 2008; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010a; Talbot & Billsberry, 2011; Vogel, Rodell, & Lynch, 2016; Wheeler, 2010b) Misfit is a word that people use to describe themselves or others, but in these early stages of research into the construct, it shares definitional and conceptual problems that are common in the organisational fit domain. “Fit refers to a relationship between P and E, which implies that both work in concert to influence outcomes” (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010:5). This viewpoint is also reinforced by (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007:8) who say that “PE fit can be understood as a specific type of person-situation interaction that specifies match or congruence as the way the two factors interact – high congruence between corresponding or commensurate person and environment dimensions yields more positive outcomes. “Misfit is understood “only to occur once the
range of compatibility has been exceeded....” (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010:6).

Similarly, Cable and Edwards, (2004:823) drawing on the work of Endler and Magnusson (1976) and French et al., (1982) say that “people look to their position of needs and supplies available in the environment, that is their psychological need fulfilment, and when those supplies fall short then misfit occurs people will become dissatisfied”.

The subject of a person’s perceived degree of fit could well be, as suggested by Billsberry, (2008), of great importance in measuring how well or not a person relates to the organisation that employs them, or how satisfied and content they are with the overall situation. This view is something the author labels as a marker of ‘organisational wellness’. The inference is that a sense of misfit, a perception that all is not well with one or more of the multi-dimensions of the organisational environment could be an indication to managers that the negative influence of one of the dimensions of fit is overwhelming the others and needs to be addressed.

”Individuals seek out vocations that have a career environment that matches their interests. Thus, high P-E fit or congruence results in satisfaction, vocational stability, and achievement. In contrast, low P-E fit is likely to result in dissatisfaction and ultimately leaving that occupation” (Sekiguchi, 2004:178)

However, as already stated not everyone feels like they fit in or they are seen to not fit in. Are these people who ‘do not fit’ in the PE sense just people who would not fit anywhere or are they something more than this? Are they people who fitted in well with the organization but something happens that triggers them into either a perceived sense or observed state of misfit, the literature on the nature of people who do not fit and misfits is only in its infancy.
Billsberry, Van Meurs, Coldwell, and Marsh, (2006) define misfit as occurring “when the compatibility [between the individual and the organisation] is detrimental to both parties” (p. 10) saying also as already mentioned in the introduction that “at present we know very little about the process of becoming a misfit” (p.12). Empirical studies (Follmer et al., in press; Talbot, 2010) paper of 36 people interviewed 94% of them had at some time experienced some degree of misfit. The next part of this chapter examines how people manage their affective misfit state starting with looking at some constructs adjacent to fit and misfit theories.

2.15.2 Conservation of Resources Theory (COR)

PE fit theories are based around the goodness of fit of an individual’s own attributes (usually values) to those of the organisation to bring about positive outcomes. These are commonly viewed as job commitment, productivity, less voluntary absenteeism, and less negative stress, job satisfaction and commitment (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005; Schneider et al., 1995; Verquer et al., 2003). The main premise is that PE fit is at its best when there is congruence of personal values to the organisation as demonstrated by the dominant culture therein. Mentions of misfit occur where there is low fit or no fit, with no consideration given to this state as a separate construct. Not, that is, until misfit research from scholars such as (Billsberry, 2008; Talbot, 2010; Williamson, 2013). Not much is known about misfit on which declarative statements can be made. In addition, as Edwards, (2008:220) highlights in his review of PE fit, as a theory it lacks firm foundations of a good theory leading to “to subsume portions of the construct as a component of other constructs”. Of interest to misfit research and to avoid going down the same path is a ‘middle ground’ approach that
integrates multiple theories – a conservation of resources (COR) perspective (Hobfoll, 1985, 1989). This is an approach taken by some researchers to understand the PE fit and tentative misfit constructs.

In COR, fit is regarded as a subjective assessment of whether a person owns or doesn’t the personally valued resources of “objects, personal characteristics, conditions or energies that are valued by the individual” Hobfoll, (1989) as cited in (Wheeler, Halbesleben, & Shaninie, 2013) to meet the work environment’s requirements. These resources, say Harrison et al., (2007) can be found within the person or the environment, or as a combination of them both; sounding somewhat like complementary fit. COR has its basis within motivation theory which argues that people invest in, accumulate and protect the personal resources aforementioned both within and outside of the work environment. This is because each person is contained within their own idiosyncratic resource and demand environment where resources are different in value as perceived by that individual from another person. They go beyond the simplicity of a need-supply arrangement which has a basis in monetary reward to a more altruistic level.

The amount and level of that desired and accumulated resource is used to buffer negative aspects such as stress, burnout and impacts to mental and physiological well-being, which are also connected by PE fit scholars to levels of fit and misfit. COR according to Hobfoll (1989) is based on the following tenets and linking in with motivation theory:

- “People have a motive to protect existing resources against actual or threatened loss (termed ‘Primacy of Loss Principle’).

- People possess a motive to invest resources as a means to gain more resources (termed 'Resource Investment Principle').
• Those with more resources are in a better position to mitigate and are resilient to resource loss.
• People with an excess of one resource can bundle other resources around it to create a resource caravan. Excess resources are invested to create a resource gain spiral where gain begets gain.
• Those lacking resources tend to make poor investment decisions. This leads to a resource loss spiral where loss begets loss”.

In his 2001 work Hobfoll is more specific in what is regarded as a valuable resource – criteria such as ‘sense of pride in myself’, ‘feeling that I am accomplishing my work’. Within the work environment resources such as ‘support from my co-workers’, ‘acknowledgement of my accomplishment’ is described as important. Such aspects did come out of my data, indeed were specifically mentioned because they input to someone’s sense of individual worth and esteem, their social identity. In order to preserve a job, ameliorate a sense of misfit and preserve some form of control over their organisational place an individual will mould an ecosystem to satisfy their needs within the needs-supply equation (Fevre et al., 2003; Van Vianen & Stoelhorst, 2007a). This leads on to another facet considered within the PE fit literature, that of Niche Construction Theory.

2.15.3 Niche construction theory

This theory posits that people have a psychological predisposition to imitate the ‘most successful’ individuals to achieve personal prestige or best pay-off (Henrich & Boyd, 2001; Pe, 2008; Van Vianen & Stoelhorst, 2007). As well as that there are increasing shifts of organisations towards cost cutting, downsizing and reorganising in effort to become more competitively agile and profitable
which puts new demands upon employees new and existing (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999; Ployhart, 2012). Job security is also threatened. Added to those stresses are those of family life, leading people to resolve stress wherever possible. In the work scenario, I have already discussed Edwards’s (1998, 2008) proposal that people will, in the work place seek to resolve any levels of PE misfit to therefore reduce mental and physical discordance to bring about that state.

From the aspect of niche construction theory, Laland, et al. (2000) says that people are not passive receivers of conformist influences and pressures from their environment. So, where someone does not initially fit in with that environment (socialisation processes not withstanding) rather than leave straight away people will as a first resort try to construct a more fitting niche for themselves through modifying important aspects of their environment, which may not be congruent with the rest of the organisational environment. Alternatively, according to Chatman, (1989) and Dickson, Resick, and Holdstein, (2008) if someone has low organization fit they may go as far as to attempt to change the organisation’s values to become more similar to their own. This argument is supported by French et al., (1982) when they describe such action as stimulated by an individual’s inner effort to resolve the imbalance of a perceived sense of misfit between inner demands and supplies from the environment and thus reducing the negative emotions such as stress and strain that go with that state.

The extent to which an individual’s attempts at change are successful one could assume, is linked to the level of their authority and informal power (French & Raven, 1959) and control that they have. Most importantly though is the basic human desire to ‘belong’ and it is with great reluctance that connections to the dominant group are broken so we will go to great lengths to either change
ourselves or aspects of the environment that are causing dissonance. “A lack of belongingness could constitute severe deprivation and cause a variety of ill effects. Furthermore, a great deal of human behaviour, emotion, and thought is caused by this fundamental interpersonal motive”..... (Higgins & Kruglanski, 2000 :25), To ‘fit’ is a basic human need as is the drive to conform (Henrich & Boyd, 2001).

Misfit as either a perception or emotion is important to understand because of the negativity and bad feeling that manifest within the individual, and the resulting psychological and physiological damage that is said to occur because of perceived misfit. Such an interpretative enquiry will be part of my primary research.

2.15.4 What misfit is not

The concept of ‘misfit’ comes out of the field of PE fit. In Billsberry, van Meurs, Coldwell and Marsh's (2006) theory paper the authors suggest that misfits are not opposites to individuals who fit and they propose that it is not necessarily the case that when the factors which cause fit are absent, misfit occurs. They go on to define misfit as occurring “when the compatibility [between the individual and the organisation] is detrimental to both parties” (2006: 10) although they acknowledge that “at present, we know very little about the process of becoming a misfit” (2006: 12). I shall investigate this process as part of my research, to look at ‘how people become misfits, what does misfit feel like how do the processes of misfit creation come about?’
2.15.5 How the term ‘misfit’ is viewed in extant literature

The current fit and related literature seem to view misfit as an absence of fit or as the opposite to fit, and as such offers only a few definitions:

- Misfit as a state – misfit between the needs of the individual and the environment. (Fevre, Matheny, & Kolt, 2003: 731)

- Misfit as a state – Person-organization misfit refers to a mismatch between the individual and the organisation and relates to individual factors (goals, values and culture) that are more than, less than, or qualitatively different from the comparable elements at the organisation level. (Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2005)

- Misfit as a state – in the context of needs-supplies fit, where a person’s job no longer supplies the characteristics that meet his or her needs (Simmering, Colquitt, Noe, & Porter, 2003)

- Misfit as a psychopathology - “that is an enduring and negative state of mind. It stays with and afflicts ‘sufferers’ both inside and outside of the environment in which they perceive themselves as misfits. It is persistent, unwanted, unpleasant, and something that they would rather not be…..”(Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010).

- In the same paper, misfit is further elaborated upon in the context of a label in that an individual may receive in a particular social environment. Misfits are individuals who deviate from their immediate surroundings due to their appearance, conceptions, or behaviours. They are maladjusted to a specific environment, which makes that others perceive them as misfits. The label is a result of interpersonal interactions rather than an enduring feeling or
pathology the individual develops as a reaction to his or her perception of the environment.

- Misfit as a label (Billsberry, Van Meurs, Coldwell, & Marsh, 2006)
  - When the compatibility is detrimental to both parties. In other words, when there is an incompatibility between the two parties that is detrimental to both. “Colloquially, people use the term ‘misfit’ quite broadly to denote a person who differs from the social or organisational norm” (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008:1).

- Misfit as a label: “misfits who defy or bypass the rules of an established industry and remain isolated from existing (art) worlds”. (Jones, Svejenova, & Strandgaard, 2011)

As a starting point, we need some comprehension of how the word misfit is defined, without assuming that it is just an opposite of the word ‘fit’. In a way similar to that adopted by Allport in the early 1900s (Allport & Oldbert, 1936) when looking for words that described personality traits (he found 17,953 in Webster's New International Dictionary). A search of several English based dictionaries produced the following definitions for ‘misfit’.

- A person not suited to their behaviour or attitude to a particular social environment (“Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged,” 2003).

- A person whose behaviour or attitude sets them apart from others in an uncomfortably conspicuous way (Dictionaries, 2010)

- A person who does not fit in comfortably with the surrounding situation or society; one who cannot conform or adjust to the circumstances in which he lives (“The Collaborative International
Dictionary of English v.0.48,”n.d.)

- A person unable to adapt to their circumstances (Princeton University, 2010)
- Someone who is not suited to a situation or who is not accepted by other people because their behaviour is strange or unusual (Press, 2011)
- A person who is poorly adapted to a situation or environment (“Merriam Webster’s dictionary,” 2011)
- A person who is not integrated into or is unsuited for his or her social environment, job, or the like (Wordsmyth, 2011)

It would seem from the above definitions that there is some common sense understanding of what a misfit is but not at a level that is academically robust, and I sought therefore to derive a definition that meets this criterion as part of my research.

Once done, misfit in the context of PE fit could be used across country borders, from English speaking countries to others where English is the second language. For example, in Holland, there is no word that describes the English interpretation of ‘misfit’ or words that embody the feeling of misfit (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010). This state adds a difficulty to misfit research as to how such people in transnational organisations are described or labelled and reinforces the need for a universal definition, which acknowledges that fit can occur in one or multi-dimensions but not in others. As Kristof-Brown et al. (2002:985) note, PE fit “is a comprehensive notion that necessarily includes one’s compatibility with multiple systems in the work environment”. Once the perceptions of misfit outweigh the positives of fit (albeit in several dimensions), then as Edwards and
Shipp (2007:226) show, misfit in between individuals’ needs and what the environment supplies can lead to people experiencing stress, “such that stress exists when supplies fall short of the person’s needs”, (ibid:24).

We need a definition, a commonly understood understanding of the affective misfit state that some people end up, how they are feeling, how they got there and what they do to psychologically move; because, at worst, it has been conjectured, misfits think of themselves as victims in their current circumstances who see that something wrong has been done to them (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010) and will either leave the organisation (Schneider, 1987) or stay and exhibit negative behaviours that affect their co-workers and the group. This situation does not bode well for either party. An academic definition and understanding of the cognitive process attached to the misfit construct are needed for people who do not fit before the label ‘misfit’ becomes embedded in academic literature as a negative descriptor, an unwanted state to be in, something that is not good. A point of view now being taken by fit scholars in the face of realisation that misfit is becoming a pressing concern because of the painful psychological state that it is.

2.16 Recent developments in misfit research

To recap, value congruence between an employee and their organisation is a cornerstone approach to looking at fit, where values defined are, (Chatman, 1989:389) “a fundamental and enduring aspect of both organizations and people is their values”. Fit, as previously mentioned has garnered much empirical research into the multi-dimensions of this favourable aspect. However, the suspected dark side of value incongruence, a misfit perspective, as associated with psychological upset, incompatibility, and stress (Edwards & Shipp, 2007;
Follmer, Talbot, Kristof-Brown, Astrove, & Billsberry, in press) has until recently, been overlooked. Coming into research lens, as I have already discussed in previous pages is that a state of misfit is likely to result in reduced work productivity and discontent. Or, as first put forward, by Schneider through his ASA model, for a person to have to exit and find work elsewhere (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005; Schneider, 1987). Such a move though brings with it the psychological stress of moving (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 2013). As well as the loss of comfort that comes with a disconnection to job embeddedness, which is a social, psychological and financial anchoring to family ties, and connection to non-work factors such as community and business (Mitchell et al., 2001). The idea then that exit is the only option to counter organisational misfit is not an easy one to take. Especially when there is likely upheaval, relocation, disruption, and a negative impact on family and friends (Billsberry et al., 2008; Follmer et al., in press; Vogel et al., 2016). An alternative that has been observed is that people stay in the organisation and ‘job craft’, “redesign their jobs in ways that can foster job satisfaction, as well as engagement, resilience, and thriving at work” (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2008:1). Or rely on leisure activities outside of work to buffer the adverse effects of their misfit to job performance and relationships with co-workers (citizenship behaviour) especially when, in a tight labour market the availability of jobs to walk into are restricted (CIPD, 2017; Cohen, 2017).

A recent empirical study by (Vogel et al., 2016:1561) presents a definition of misfit as: “employees whose important values are incongruent with the values of their organization”. The study looked at the aspect of value incongruence and what employees do to mitigate the negative effect of their misfit in this regard.
Through the use of the 24 items of the Work Values Survey from Cable and Edwards (2004), which is based on Schwartz’s (1992) circumplex model of human values that assesses eight core individual and organizational work values: altruism, relationships, pay, security, authority, prestige, variety, and autonomy. They, (Vogel et al. 2016:1562) found that “people with low-value congruence could mitigate the otherwise negative effects of value incongruence through job crafting”. Further empirical studies around the misfit condition, however, are suggesting that it is multifaceted and not as simple as based on values, and the ‘misfits' leave' hypothesis.

The most recent research on people’s experience of misfit at work comes from a narrative study by Folmer et al., (in press). They found that for most employees they had features of fit and misfit within their psychological makeup and that the misfit element was triggered by a change in the workplace such as, organisational restructuring, new supervisors or co-workers, or changing job responsibilities. Once in a state of misfit, further investigation with those people reported three different strategies that they took in response to their misfit. In the first instance they sought to reduce the causes of their misfit, termed a resolution strategy, or, secondly, they would take on a relief strategy to lessen the emotional pain coming from the feelings of misfit. That second approach would often mean exiting the organisation, the extent to, and speed in which this was done all depended on their hierarchical position within the organisation. In that, for low-level jobs, it was pretty easy to find work elsewhere, but for people in higher-level, professional positions it was more difficult because of their continuance commitment, so people tended to stay and seek within-company relief (discussed within this study in chapters 5 and 6). For the last and third strategy, called
resignation, is where people fail to find solace or resolution, so they have to cope with their misfit situations. To do so may involve disengagement or taking pride in being a ‘misfit’. As already discussed, the field of fit seeks a definition of misfit that goes beyond treating the state as more than low fit, or a lack of fit, or an absence of fit. To misfit suggests a sense of incongruity, of being in an unsuitable organisation, or being different in a way that is uncomfortable, and as such, important to the individual (Van Vianen & De Pater, 2012; Vogel et al., 2016). There are further characteristics which have been identified over the years as being pertinent to perceived misfit, and these are shown in the diagram below. They include results based on an empirical study by, Cooper-Thomas & Wright, (2013) entitled Person-environment misfit: the neglected role of social context that is, to look within the organisation for factors not picked up upon in previous research.

Table 1 Individual and organizational misfit dimensions (Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Fit</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Fit</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The additional (Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013) data as shown in italics within Table 1 Individual and organizational misfit dimensions (Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013) above came from their empirical study through the responses to
323 online questionnaires, including open-ended comments function, and based on the subject of ‘social relations at work’. To examine misfit in the context of quality of co-worker relationships using an inductive approach, and in doing so extends the literature on misfit through introducing an interpersonal relationship focus. Their results came up with four categories around relational demography for age, sexuality and gender with none of them being particularly upsetting to make someone want to leave the organisation. Individual differences in personality, cognitive style and desire for social interaction was mentioned (some co-workers not good at it) and explicit statements that people very much want to be part of a group. With “the data suggesting that relationship quality at work is central to perception of incongruence” (Ibid: 21). On the organisation side mention was made of misfit perceptions arising “because of constant change and upheaval at work, and role changes as well as employment contract effects” page 21 which coheres with the findings of the Folmer et al. in press study. In conclusion, the primary contributing factor of the Cooper-Thomas & Wright, (2013) paper is that it is the presence or lack of quality relationships with co-workers may cause perceptions of misfit. It is this particular study that intrigues me because it has looked at interactions between people where I suspect that I will get some answers to my research questions.

2.17 Summary of PE fit

Fit Assessment has progressed over the years to includes multi-dimensions and multi conceptualisations based on different characteristics and indicates that “fit at high levels of the person-environment is more strongly associated with positive outcomes than fit at low levels of these entities” (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013:6). With misfit being calculated within these dimensions as
being points of incongruence, highlighted through the more precise of use of polynomial regression and surface plot methodology (Edwards & Parry, 1993; Edwards, 1996, 2007). What is more, the types of misfit have been identified as having asymmetrical effects.

Not everything can be calculated, thus the other, second and dominant stream of fit research. That of ‘perceived fit’ where fit is viewed as a psychological construct. In that thoughts and senses about interactions with referent others are put together in someone’s head which then goes towards their sense of fit or misfit. Such perceptions become the basis of outcomes in the form of attitudes and behaviours (Ostroff, 2007c). Everyone has different dimensions and measures of what they deem important and salient to them. An understanding of these (self-selected) variables and weightings are acknowledged as the closest way to understanding to what goes towards a person's decision-making process and the outcomes, that is, their behaviours in response to them. For the little-known outcomes from feelings of misfit, stress is the most well-known and this can be detrimental to both the individual and the organisation for which they work (Edwards et al., 1998). More research into misfit is needed, a firm basis on which all attributes, connections and interdependencies can sit. Not ending up like the PE fit discipline which is still dogged by questions around the basic precept of what makes up ‘fit’. There is the danger that the construct, the experience of what makes a misfit might go the same way, with no firm foundation on which to build out research. Misfit started off as calculated points of incongruence between a person and environmental variables such as style demands of a job, pace of work, stress, dyadic work relationships that hinted at adverse outcomes. Further research might just end up being looked at from
individual researcher's pet area of interest, rather like fit. Another mishmash.

There are though a small number of researchers looking at misfit as a perceived experience, from an inside-out perspective where the thoughts and actions of the misfits become part of studies (Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013; Edwards & Billsberry, 2010a; Talbot, 2010; Vogel et al., 2016; Williamson, 2013). Their work has been reviewed above, and is referred to in a second literature review in chapter 5 as and when aspects are found relevant to the data analysis coming from this thesis.

To summarise, there has been a lot of PE fit research, but misfit has been neglected, indeed, more than this, misfit seems essential because of theoretical concerns that those ‘suffering' from misfit take the traumatic step of leaving their employer. It must be quite an issue psychologically for these people if such personal change is required. Also, it suggests that individual internal remedies cannot be found, and if job crafting is not an option, then exit is their only solution. The studies so far show that for some people misfit is psychologically difficult, which also makes the study of the construct essential both for the welfare of the individual and the effect that their upset can have on factors within the organisation.

\textit{The gap - to build a picture of the psychological construct of affective 'misfit' within PE fit.}
Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction: A grounded theory study

In the introduction and literature review chapters I presented an argument that the person-environment (PE) fit field lacks an in-depth understanding of the psychological construct of misfit. To achieve such a comprehension required a qualitative exploratory approach to examine people's own experiences and feelings about the interaction of themselves (P) within the organisational environment (E), leading onto an understanding of how and why a perceived sense of misfit comes about, and why these feelings matter. To examine the experience of organisational misfit for people, I took a constructivist grounded theory methodology (GTM), which is different to and does not follow on from those already applied in the PE fit field. Indeed, it sets out an innovative approach within the fit discipline to examining people's narratives and the psychological set up around how and why they construct their misfit perceptions. To get down to the level of where people are freely expressing their opinion, upset and feelings I have applied the method of Netnography (examination of web-based narratives and comments), to capture postings from web-based discussion fora where 'misfits' have freely expressed their reasons for feeling the way that they do.

My methodology answers the call from fit researchers for qualitative approaches to developing theory of the misfit construct (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). I present here a discussion around my use of a constructivist grounded theory methodology as being the most suitable qualitative approach. I started with generative questions and through an iterative process developed linkages between theoretical core concepts and the data, in a constant
comparative method. To do this meant that I was immersed in the data to discover themes their interrelationships and inferred causality or influences, linkages, past and present. Thus providing theory that was grounded in the data rather than from an analytical construct from within the PE fit field which so far suggests that misfit is maybe just an absence of fit (Billsberry, 2008; Talbot & Billsberry, 2007). I argue the development of an in-depth literature review as a precursor to data collection and analysis from the viewpoint of a constructivist grounded theory methodology. I also address the problem of not being able to ignore the literature or to block out previously learned experiences when analysing the data, as a methodological issue. Additionally, I also discuss the aspects of reliability and validity (a positivist term) in the context of this qualitative study followed on by the oft-discussed problem of generalisation. Added to these critiques upon the subjective qualitative research I also deliberate the nature of my own past work experiences influencing the groundedness of data interpretation and theory construction. I present these within the critical reflection section, which also details my view of the world for philosophical purposes, along with engaging with the Glaser/Strauss grounded theory debate to the extent of supporting the choice of the approach adopted.

In order, also to be clear on the reasons for the underpinning methodology, I discuss different research paradigms, the ontologies and epistemologies that I could have adopted. That has informed what I put forward as a cogent argument to support a social constructivist archetype as being the best one that underpinned my investigation into why people feel like they do at work, and to explore the context in which perceptions of misfit arise. The latter part of the chapter proceeds with a detailed account of the how the data were captured and analysed,
assisted using tools such as Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). The summary and conclusion of the methodology chapter 3 are presented at the end.

Firstly, I re-present my research questions and objectives from the introductory chapter which leads into a discussion of my philosophical position and thus my rationale for the research design. These come from the initial literature review and call from the PE fit discipline to develop knowledge about the psychological state of organisational misfit its antecedents and outcomes.

3.2 Research questions and objectives

These are based on the call from fit researchers to examine the psychological construct of affective misfits, its antecedents and outcomes as already discussed in Chapter 1 at 1.3

**Research Questions**

1. What are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit?
2. What are the consequences to self and perhaps others of feeling like a misfit?
3. How do employees manage their feelings or position of misfit?

**Research Objectives**

1. To examine whether there are certain factors that lead to someone’s sense of misfit
2. To investigate whether there are consequences of an individual’s sense of misfit.
3. To examine how people cope and manage their sense of misfit on a daily basis
I now present more detail to that research process through an explanation of
the research design I adopted, and an evaluation of the methods used.

3.3 Research paradigm

My study was an explanatory one seeking in the first instance to explore the
‘what brings about an affective state of misfit’ and of possible causal relations
rather than just the ‘what is going on’ of a descriptive study. It was a qualitative
study set outside of controlled setups examining commentary presented by people
within an organisational environment, rather than through experiments or surveys
of variables identified by researchers from a hypothetico-deductive approach.
Where, in that approach theory is the starting point rather than the data, and the
theories are tested by deriving hypotheses from them and then seeking
falsification towards finding one that is ‘true’ (Popper, 2003; Willig, 2001). This
study has been an inductive one from the ‘bottom up', to create a theory from the
data itself. I chose this over hypothesis testing, thus an interpretive rather than a
deductive approach because I did not know what the ‘correct measures’ for misfit
might be. Beyond that is, just viewing a misfit state as a construct opposite to fit
and to, therefore, reuse the same measures which might not be appropriate
(Talbot & Billsberry, 2007).

My approach is from a psychological perspective, to explore the misfit
world of individual, their rich experiences and the context in which they are
formed which fits in well with a grounded theory methodology and back into the
field of nursing from where it first originated. In that I have taken guidance from
the qualitative approaches and arguments from articles in nursing, medicine,
psychiatry and psychology that are involved in exploring the complex world of
the human perception, feelings, thoughts and attitudes (Golofshani, 2003; Leung,
2015; Psychology, Journal, & Feb, 2011; Rennie, 2000; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001) because they offered a path to follow in examining discussants postings without prior judgment or measure so as to really understand what was going on for people, often in a distressful situation.

I examined in depth, each statement made by people experiencing a sense of what they have termed as 'misfit' and moved towards an understanding of how a psychological perception of misfit comes about within a person's frame of reference. I took a subjective research approach that looked beyond the objectivity of what was being presented to see where the emotion and thoughts were coming from, such as past experiences, psychological make-up and influences from others. Through the lens of social constructivism, I examined discussants’ narratives for the interrelationships they posed as coming from communications with others, their own mental processes and behaviour, to understand how their realities are constructed.

3.4 Philosophical viewpoint

My philosophical position in this study has been firmly that of an interpretivist and at an individual level because of my attempt "to gain a deep understanding of the phenomena being investigated"(Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998:277). I have taken advantage of interpretivism as a philosophy developed as a critique of positivism in the social sciences, to incorporate human interest and interaction into research studies, because of the premise that people construct reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As posed at a Fit conference, (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010):

“Although many years have passed by, it is not too late to study fit (and misfit) with idiographic techniques that seek to
establish the richness of individuals’ perceptions. Indeed, by taking such an approach, we might resolve our definitional and conceptualisation problems”.

To understand individual’s perceptions, how they make them, what are the inputs past and present to their felt state of misfit was the aim of this study. The decision-making, methodological approaches, and methods I, therefore, adopted to collect data have been driven by my philosophical frame of reference, starting with the ontological position of ‘what is’. To address what, for that person, makes up the nature of existence. Taking each person's perception of what is real and meaningful for them, that is the cognitive aspect because of the interaction between themselves and other organisational ‘actors'. Such an approach forms the basis of a social constructivist epistemology (how we know what we know), a subjective ontology (our world-views, how existence is viewed), with an interpretivist theoretical underpinning. These theoretical perspectives have influenced my choice of methodology and methods employed to collect data and predicates all my assumptions. In more detail, and following the four elements format of (Crotty, 2003) I now present and discuss my theoretical perspectives.

Crotty, at his admittance, did not include ontology as part of the research process format he, first, set out in 1998. Instead, he conflated with epistemology from his reasoning that the two are mutually dependent because they both represent a person’s worldview, thus difficult to talk about separately. That aside, there now follows an overview of my ontological position because it is not uncommon to see it discussed separately (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006; Shankar, Elliott, & Goulding, 2001).
3.5 Ontology – subjectivism

Ontological issues encompass whether the social world is considered an abstract, an external influence upon the researcher and the people within the study, or whether people are viewed as social actors that mould and create the surrounding situations. From what little is known about misfit so far, it is a psychological state created by people in their minds based on the effects emanating from interactions, the agency from the organisational environment as well as personal agency such as past influential life experiences. As such, there is an internal realism for everyone, a different ‘reality-for-us’, where people construct his or her reality (Rowlands, 2005; Walsham, 1995). An understanding of those social processes required a subjective, interpretive approach to getting inside the internal world of those generating them. This study was an in-depth one from the perception of the misfits themselves and goes towards examining why the misfit feelings matter both to the individual and the organisation in which they are involved. To examine the misfits ‘voice' to identify what is going on for each of them; so that I can offer a definition of misfit to the PE fit field and to give insight into why knowledge of misfit is vital to scholars and management practitioners. That required in this instance a subjective ontological position.

As already presented in chapter 2 the literature review, positivism and post-positivism as highlighted by Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, (2013) is the underlying epistemology of many fit studies including work into the perceived fit. As argued in the fit literature post-positivism with an objective ontology does not support the in-depth examination of participants' realities. So, although this approach may work for perceived fit, it did not work for studies into misfit because we don’t know much about what perceived misfit is. We can’t assume that fit and misfit
are opposites, that is, "two ends of the same spectrum" (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007:1). We do not know too much about the attributes of misfit, nor of the variables that people regard as meaningful for them, recent studies into that subject notwithstanding (Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013; Williamson, 2013). Through my study, I have found out some of what goes towards making up someone’s perceived state of misfit, their affective psychological state. To do so required an interpretive approach through a subjective ontology, to understand how the participants generated and expressed their meaning. That needs any researcher to look through the eyes of the subject to understand the richness and complexity of their lived experiences. Until that was done, I argue that there is no objective reality to be measured for misfit and not at this stage that can be replicated with any sense of external validity. Yet.

A subjective ontology supported my research approach, to understand and interpret ‘reality’ as presented differently by respondents because life per se and social interactions within are constructed by people; and they bring into situations their highly individualistic thoughts and experiences. Instead of from an objective ontology, wherein there is a possible right and wrong, and a single, actual way in which the world can be viewed through variables captured and measured through surveys and similar (Orlikowski, Baroudi, & Orlikowski, 1990). To that end, my ontological position to answer the research questions posed is that of subjectivism. That is supported by my social constructivist (not constructionist) epistemology.

3.6 Epistemology

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with how we come to know the world, and how we come to hold beliefs. An epistemological position is
about the relationship between the researcher and what can be known - what they see and how. Epistemology provides the philosophical underpinning – the credibility – which legitimises a narrative of knowledge as I understood it and gave me a framework on which to build a rigorous methodology (Willis, 2007). I considered this as most efficiently done through the epistemological framework of social constructivism following the influence of Jean Piaget (Piaget, 1969). She looked at how people made meaning of their interactions and experience based on their makeup; the internal workings of the person rather than (just) interactions as influenced by external others as in social constructionism. This epistemology fitted in with my worldview of how comprehension is put together, from a humanistic viewpoint to look at the expressed experiences, opinions and context of the study's participants to form an opinion that goes towards theory development. Much in the same way that my time in humanistic therapy was spent, to look beyond the externalities as sometimes suffering from fundamental attribution error to investigate the nitty-gritty of what is going on and from outside of their perceptions. That is not to say that I bifurcate constructivism and constructionism it's just that I favoured the naturalistic enquiry approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) which comes with constructivism and fits in with the Charmaz (2006) conception of Grounded Theory Methodology that I have used. My approach helps set a path towards the use of positivistic methods in the future by setting up a way for the nature of questions best asked.

Edmondson and McManus (2007) argue that when a theory is nascent with many open-ended questions that need to be answered qualitative research methods are recommended; it is only when the theory is more mature that quantitative methods should be used to test hypotheses. In PE fit, however, as
already discussed, within the previous chapter the studies have been through positivist and post-positivist lens and are nomothetic ones. PE fit, or misfit has not been looked at from an interactionist and constructivist perspective and rarely at an ideographic level. Which I argue is somewhat self-defeating when one considers that the fundamental premise of PE fit, and its interest is around the interaction of people and the outcomes based on their make-up; so, it would not make sense to isolate them as packages of measurable attributes. In other words, it seems that many fit studies have put the cart before the horse by starting every experience as cognitively matched and compared to previous experiences and psychological makeups. A constructivist epistemology is sitting better for that approach as well as fitting in well with my Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) of the social constructivist flavour (Charmaz, 2006). It is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Since I have taken a social constructivist approach I show, through the category titles the nuanced meanings behind what discussants have said, using their own words wherever possible. Systematically in the sense that I can show how and why data were collected and analysed and not from a positivist stance. Before presenting my data analysis methods, there needs, first, an overview of my background in the context of a critical reflection.

3.7 Critical reflection

With this study approach coming from a subjective ontology as underpinned by an interpretive paradigm, there is the matter of acknowledging and dealing with my viewpoint and socially constructed thoughts and opinions. So that I can show how that background has influenced how I subjectively
collected, analysed and presented the data (Darke et al., 1998; Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014). I am a woman of fifty-nine years of age with forty years work experience behind me of both private and public-sector organisations in the United Kingdom, with a firm belief that objective reality does not exist for everything. My ontological position here is subjectivist, going as far to play down the existence of fact outside of scientifically based lab experiments as in the field of Physics, Maths, Computing and Biology. I resonate with "asserting instead that realities are social constructions of the mind, and that there exist as many constructions as there are individuals (although clearly many constructions will be shared)" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:43). I do however take on board the post-positivist/critical realist approach where the influence of external agency has a part to play on how people interact and perceive those interactions at a dyadic level.

My initial thoughts were that my research strategy would be based on the post-positivist philosophy in the form of critical realism (CR) as developed primarily by Bhaskar (1978, 1979, 1993). Where, through what has been called a transcendental realism a methodological individualism (where people make decisions based on their disposition and assessment of a situation) and universal claims to truth as through a positivist lens are rejected. That through CR there is an acceptance that like positivists there is truth to knowing the world as made up of separate events that are observable and thus measurable; but that knowledge about the world is socially constructed and therefore complex (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2006). I found that approach resonates with my views especially after hearing Bhaskar himself talking about CR.
It also acts as a bridge between quantitative and qualitative studies. Not to look at the World itself, because the systems, entities and mechanism exist independent of humans in a transcendental position. CR has a dualist philosophy that allows for different quantitative measures to take place in an attempt to discover a reality (facts of experience) that positivists now acknowledge as existing and only needs to be found, but subject to causal mechanisms. These take the form of systems, processes and mechanisms, whose interactions are the basis of events and occurrences in the world and according to CR, it takes a variety of methods to find those interactions and to explore the many levels that makeup reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006; Jefferies, 2011). Which involves taking qualitative as well as quantitative approaches to go beyond the ‘surface approaches of social phenomena’; and by emphasising this critical multiplism offers a bridge to better evaluation. Critical realism as a philosophy says that there is still an objective reality, a social structure as present only in and through the activities of human agents (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson, & Norrie, 1998) that lies beyond individual consciousness and intention. Also, those aspects of the social structure that is, causal mechanisms ‘operate largely independently from the mind and action of individuals’ (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Through CR, research looks to underlying mechanisms and structures “behind phenomena is what it takes to create theories”(Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009:39), with the central premise of looking for cause and effect through agency and structure, (Syed, Mingers, & Murray, 2009).

This singular viewpoint was not taken by me because my theoretical perspective is that through interaction of individuals with aspects of the environment, considering their own psychological make-up events do occur and
that they are perceived differently each time that they do depend on who and what agency influences are involved. Cohering in part with CR and its concept of social structure as further developed by Archer (1995) which looks towards the power of agency and structure and the many layers involved:

- Geographical
- Types of organisations
- Cultures
- Individuals
- Groups
- Organisations

Each differentiated layer of reality has its own features and characteristics. These interact with and have mediated the cognitive processes that discussants have presented when setting out their understandings. Giving rise to “dualism of action and structure as two equally real, interacting systems and the premise that ‘activity is always conditioned or moulded by a pre-existing social structure of roles and expectations” (Syed et al., 2009:5). I think that this may well be true of social systems, where there is the critical realists' belief that through the ideas of 'structure' and ‘agency' social situations can be changed (Reed, 2011), but it is not for this study of individual people within organisations. Because, in Schneider's 1987 Attraction, Selection, Attrition (ASA) theory from the (PE) fit discipline and the foundation concept - that people are attracted to organisations that have similar personalities and values as themselves. In that where there is a match of person to the organisational culture, systems and processes, then homogeneity and little or no upset occurs. The whole point of people feeling like a misfit from the literature, anecdotal information and now data is that they can no longer cope
with being ‘conditioned or moulded by a pre-existing social structure of roles and expectations’ (ibid) and a sense of misfit occurs. It is an understanding of the person that is required rather than of the causes of external realities. This is what I sought to do while aware of my own critical reflection and my own subjective interpretations of the data through the coding levels.

CR as a theoretical perspective had been tempting because it offered a route to determine how feelings of misfit come about, the cause and effect, to explore the outcomes as required in research questions 2 and 3. Not though for answers to research questions 1 and here I think a solely interpretivist approach was necessary because this study is about identifying socially constructed meanings at the individual level which CR does not do. I wanted to understand how people perceived their misfit, where reality is subjective in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To get to this point, I needed to examine what misfit people had to say. I started off with doing a pilot stage of interviews calling on people I knew both within and external to the organisation for which I worked to capture an idea of what misfit meant for them.

At the interview stage, only through personal contact and snowballing from those connections to others could misfits be reached. Misfits by nature are reticent about coming forward to discuss their disposition through fear of losing their job, so only when there was a trust relationship could one to one discussions meaningfully take place. As details of the research became known, people who knew me and regarded themselves as suffering from symptoms of misfits approached me, unprompted, to voice their stories and upset. Managers dealing with perceived misfits did so through rigorous steps of company policy, overcompensating with help offered solely because of the likely legal and
financial damage to their organisation from a disgruntled employee. I think this is where my gifted age and work background was of benefit because I could relate to people's differing styles of language and resonate, at least understand the work interaction as described.

3.8 My social background

In all stages of the research, social and time context has been significant. It required an understanding and empathy of where the participant ‘was coming from’ made easier because I am mature in age, work and psychology counselling experience; and have been trained to examine a person’s relationships and interactions and from a holistic viewpoint. That has made me very much aware of the failings around fundamental attribution error (FAE), to presume that internal factors such as traits, the personality of disposition underpins behaviour rather than considering that there might be an external influence that is affecting behaviour. That being said, feelings of misfit are also something that I have personally experienced at times and witnessed it in others. So, what I know from my perceptions and from those that I have listened to and counselled in psychotherapy sessions, is that feeling like a misfit is an uncomfortable and sometimes painful and isolating psychological state to be in; and often there is no clear link as to what causes the thinking. It takes considerable in-depth retrospection to figure out possibly why, but the dominant thoughts are "I don’t want to feel like this”, as conversations with self-professed misfits over the years demonstrated. It is to be said therefore that I do not approach the subject without prior knowledge or knowledge from the PE fit literature, and despite attempts to be as open-minded as possible, pre-existing bias cannot be avoided.
3.9 Credibility and trustworthiness

The results of this study are as credible as they can be within the epistemological position and my subjective research stance. While I also incorporate an awareness of the debates within the quantitative studies of PE fit and for the arguments presented by such researchers that qualititative evidence is woolly and doesn't come from large sample sets. I, therefore, took on board suggestions to collect, analyse and establish meaning in a systematic way, to make it open to enquiry especially to readers outside of the industrial psychology discipline such as those from business organisations (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010; Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008). The data were identified using search terms connected to misfit and from terms presented by interviewees in the pilot stage. I coded the data gathered from interviews, and from open web discussion fora often line by line for the 'action' presented using a grounded theory methodology with constant memoing and personal journal introspections to give reasons for names of coding categories used. Additionally, there was a balance between the bias of the messages presented in the data because it often represented opposing viewpoints, and externalities of influence. The latter I considered when looking at causes of misfit which they reported which I would argue tempered me presenting a too one-sided analysis. Coding actions and categories were also discussed with my PhD supervisors throughout the study as part of the process to minimise the threat to the credibility of the data and how I analysed it.

3.10 Reliability and validity

The reliability and validity of results from qualitative research is a crucial aspect that, it is argued in the literature, needs to be addressed to assure the audience that results are trustworthy. In that what is the degree, if any, can the
study be replicated, results validated and whether what a subsequent researcher will ‘see and hear’ is the same as the original (Bryman, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2006). Validity is posed as an (external) approach to measuring the way that a researcher approaches the data. This is a positivistic term based on sample testing to test theory and does not align with my epistemological position, which is that of induction to build theory. In that, I examined data to find what I could find, and unable therefore to use external measures because of the paradigm that I had chosen. I cannot, thus, infer anything to the broader population based on an estimated sample size as in positivist studies.

Those of the qualitative paradigm seek answers of the kind such as “how, where, when who and why” with an objective to build a theory or refute an existing one and as such requires a phenomenological (perception and experience of objects and events as the basis of investigation), which inextricably tie in with human senses and subjectivity (Golofshani, 2003; Whittemore et al., 2001). That being said, one of the major arguments made against qualitative researchers is that the results are not replicable, and the means of measurement are inaccurate, and how can you prove that they measure what they intended to measure; but that is using the language of quantitative researchers. Validity in terms of qualitative research means “appropriateness of the tools, processes and data” (Leung, 2015:325) going on to say whether or not that the research questions are valid in respect of the required outcomes. To argue that the methodological approach is appropriate as is the research design that underpins it, and whether, the results and conclusion are valid for the sample (Leung, 2015; Golofoshani, 2003). I have clearly stated research paradigm, Philosophical viewpoint, and my ontological and epistemological position and, I also to state that my constructivist approach is
so that I could take the humanist view of the ‘individual’, as a product of their existential awareness and social interaction. To reinforce the validity of my qualitative and subjective approach, I followed the terms of the cannons of qualitative research and grounded theory. That is to prove ‘credibility’ of the inferences I have taken from the data, rather than the data itself (Corbin & Strauss, 1990a; Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008). I demonstrate that the research process and results are not as Denzin and Lincoln (1998) moot, based on “sloppy research, comprising subjective observations” (Baxter & Jack, 2008:2) and therefore not representing a truthful position.

Like every researcher, I have my own bias, which I have acknowledged and addressed from reading field work literature so that my process and conclusions of the research are not affected (Corbin & Strauss, 1990a; Mays & Pope, 1995)(Maxwell, 1996 as cited in Lewis, 2009). That does not go to say that there are not further issues to address in establishing validity criteria in qualitative research, such as the necessity to incorporate rigour of analysis subjectivity as well as creativity, especially within a constructivist GTM where one is looking to’ read’ what the data says in light of the human experience, in particular my own ‘human agency’ as far as interpretation is concerned (Whittemore et al., 2001; Rennie, 2000).

I am fortunate, in that through my methodology, grounded theory, like several qualitative approaches there is a documented step by step approach to developing theory through the rigorous stages of data collection and analysis, together with how my process of interpretation is ‘analytically memoed’. Somewhat, in the same way, that field notes from ethnographic studies are prepared. The credibility of analysis, therefore, is demonstrated right from the
beginning of the investigation. In following a grounded theory methodology, I have constructed themes and categories from the data and going through rigorous research procedures to lead to the emergence of conceptual categories. These were, during the time of this study discussed, presented at conferences and cross-checked by researchers from the fit field, for credibility, and bias.

Also, to reinforce the credibility of the inferences I have taken from the data and to support my research approach, I chose for reference a framework as put forward by Creswell and Miller (2000) see Table 2 Validity Procedures within Qualitative Lens and Paradigm Assumptions. It can guide the application of a researcher's lens and paradigms in the context of (credibility)/validity. Firstly, this involved applying the most appropriate validity procedure from within that framework against my qualitative data analysis, to establish the credibility of the study, how truthful my research results are (Creswell & Miller, 2012; Golofshani, 2003). That encompassed “using a viewpoint for establishing the validity of a study” (ibid: 125), looking through one of their three discussed lenses. For me, this was the constructivist paradigm (through a grounded theory methodology) as shown below, that which guided me on how long to stay in the field and thus determine when theoretical saturation had been achieved to give proper categories towards theory development.
During the GTM research process, I revisited the data many times, to see whether the categories, explanations and interpretations made any sense in what is termed ‘validity-as-reflexive-accounting’ (Altheide & Johnson, 2003). Also, to support the credibility of my argument I took guidance from an Academy of Management Journal paper, upon an in-depth qualitative study using a grounded interpretive approach, to produce a schematic to demonstrate my interpretation of data through the GTM 1st and 2nd order categories through to aggregate theoretical dimensions (Dacin, Munir, & Tracey, 2010). These actions present a rigorous level of analysis and are shown in detail within this chapter.

3.11 Generalisation

“Generalization, which is an act of reasoning that involves drawing broad inferences from particular observations, is widely-acknowledged as a quality standard in quantitative research” (Polit & Beck, 2010:1451). Qualitative research is thus often criticised for lacking scientific rigour and confined to small and non-probability sample sizes that cannot, therefore, have any form of generalisability, so throwing doubt on the veracity of findings (Gobo, 2004). Furthermore, another failing often pitched against qualitative researchers is that
the data is just a collection of anecdote with researcher impressions and bias within interpretations, with the results, therefore, being of little use in the generalisable sense (Mays & Pope, 1995; Payne & Williams, 2005). Generalisation is not the aim of this study, but, I contend that there is a level, albeit small, of generalisability coming through that could be of use to qualitative misfit research because of where I sourced the digitally based data, from respondents of many demographics and different industries on internet-based discussion forums. So, offering the possibility of connecting with many people. Facebook and Myspace accounted for an estimated 249 million unique visitors per month (Spinelli, 2010) with current figures topping 1.9 billion people in the first quarter of 2017 for Facebook alone (Statista, 2017). Brought about because of the birth of Web 2.00 (2004) and interactive websites where people could interrelate in real time. This has brought about the opportunity of extrapolating from the ideographic to the nomothetic and an excellent chance for qualitative researchers to do so. Moreover, the in-depth experiences that can be obtained by real-time postings coupled with rigorous inductive analysis can lead qualitative researchers towards; I would argue, a level of ‘analytic generalisation' (Polit & Beck, 2010)

I also posit that interpretative qualitative approaches can provide some form of intermediate limited generalisation, otherwise called ‘moderatum generalizations’ and indeed are unavoidable (Payne & Williams, 2005). In an earlier paper by Williams (2000:209) arguing that “interpretivist deny the possibility of generalization, or they ignore the issue, but they do generalise and that this is inevitable”. A position that I take here. The goal of this research is to explore the psychological construct of an affective misfit state, so I went to the
Internet to find out where the (many) suspected misfits were hiding and expressing voice using the anonymity that web-based fora can give you. I have used data from open discussion fora across a wide range of respondents and where the geographical spread of the data collection is across the English-speaking net itself. Through accessing comments made by people in varying work organisations of different ages, genders, social backgrounds and time contexts and often in real time rather than retrospective, generalisations are bound to happen. Closer examination of the data as provided in the next chapter shows how it may well also be cross-sectional and longitudinal, adding rigour to its validity and usefulness.

Moreover, in taking on board the arguments of Payne & Williams, (2005) and Charmaz, (2006) in that because grounded theory as a methodology used. Through its rigour of analysis through a constant comparison process, generalisation although not a goal may seem possible. In that regard, then qualitative research has something of note to offer to the field of person-environment (PE) fit which at times has been overcast by a methodological stalemate. This study looking at misfit could act as a precursor to similar approaches in PE fit. With access, these days to ‘big data’ as a result of postings to social media, public discussion fora, blogs and self-authored publications and missives, together with new methods such as Netnography there is a very credible argument for saying that theoretical and perhaps analytical generalisation is possible here. My methods, that of netnography (examination of web-based narratives and comments), goes straight to the (many) specific groups of people who have characteristics of self-proclaimed organisational misfit, which are at the centre of the phenomenon I studied. So, so not only adding to the veracity of a
qualitative approach but supporting a case that generalisation may well be likely. To get to that stage, I present a discussion around my choice of methodology.

3.12 Using grounded theory (GTM) for misfit research

I determined that the best methodology to support in-depth analysis to the scoping research questions was best supported through grounded theory (GT), particularly the interpretive analysis process as used by the second generation of constructivist grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2000; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2008). First, I present a general overview of grounded theory and my reasons for using it, leading on to an overview of the original ‘classic’ Glaser/Strauss GT approach. I then follow with my discussion around the use of the 2nd generation GT, the social constructivist approach of Charmaz (2000, 2006).

Grounded theory is “an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data” Glaser & Strauss, 1967 as cited in (Martin & Turner, 1986:1). It offers a comprehensive method, not of just ‘coding’ data as GT is often used for but of generating theory against a background of a consensual social constructionist perspective, where the interest is in the nature of knowledge, how it is created (Andrews, 2012; Urquhart, Lehmann, & Myers, 2009). To generate a new theory that accounts for the relationship of an individual or collective experience to the society under study. Moreover, the generation of theory from the bottom up served as a platform for critiquing established theories by contrasting interview coded data against established bodies of literature (Thomas, 2003). Something that I considered to be of value here because the area of misfit is currently
subsumed within person-environment (PE) fit as a calculation to reflect lack of it, so therefore no qualitative or interpretive understanding.

Grounded theory first started off as a method developed by Glaser and Strauss and presented in their book The Discovery of Grounded Theory in 1967. So-called because it gave the origins of conceptual theory as generated from the words and actions of the participants under study, that is, "grounded' in the data rather than forcing on it the received concepts of others" (Glaser, 2002:23). It is an evolving qualitative research method that aided me in developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed. It was developed by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to counter the methods of research at that time that was mostly about verification of theory or the development of theory through logical deduction rather than coming from the data itself (Goulding, 1999; Urquhart, 2013). This would, under a grounded theory approach come about because of coding and categorising the emergent (often qualitative) data into patterns and relationships than creating theoretical concepts through a rigorous and systematic system of levels of analysis. Where concepts (categories) are defined as the "naming of an emergent social pattern grounded in research data" (Glaser, 2002a), which I sought to do, so as to build theory inductively, ground up.

For GT back then in 1967 its new approach and proposition were that due to a continuous interplay between data collection and its analysis, conceptual theory evolves (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Not as was traditionally done, as previously mentioned in a deductive approach but to do it as part of the research process as "general method of [constant] comparative analysis" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:8). To conduct as suggested by the term to compare like with like,
to look for emerging patterns and themes as well as providing guidelines for collecting additional data (Corbin & Strauss, 1978; Goulding, 1999). My use of this constant comparative method and analytical approach involved a lot of comparisons and thought on my part, which I thought was a well-founded rigorous and considered approach for a qualitative researcher such as myself operating in an unknown field of study (Birks & Mills, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 1990b; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The parallel construction and comparison of resultant categories, a key feature of grounded theory, was most thought provoking and took me outside of the (limited) literature on misfit. That is not to say that I didn’t use prior knowledge and terminology already gathered from my studies of the fit and misfit, but I followed the ethos of GTM to look outside of apparent categories and relationships into new fields of literature. The “constant data guides the researcher into the building of abstract categories and their properties, which since they emerge from the data will be clearly important to a theory explaining the kind of behavior under observation “(Glaser & Strauss, 1967:36). For example, in the case of misfit feelings, influences of community and factors outside of the organisational context have come through the data and formed the basis of my further coding and examination.

Once I started, "the researcher is lead in all directions which seem relevant and work”(Glaser, 1978:46). As demonstrated in this thesis and cohering with guidance given by Strauss (1987), my data sources were those that yielded the most valuable and relevant data. To also acknowledge and display the necessity to provide rigour to the research process through an audit trail [for this research done facilitated through a software package called NVivo 11 10] (Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). Once preliminary data was available, I started my
analysis with a process called initial coding where I identified and labelled valuable words and clusters to characterise what was happening (action words) within the narrative. These could also be in vivo codes where verbatim quotes from participants were used. As coding progressed an understanding of the data started to emerge so did my thinking about new ideas and what to look for next. I aimed to remain ‘open-minded’, to be receptive to what the data was saying and to code accordingly, to see where to next gather data from, rather than from the lead and influence of a literature review. This action of sampling of additional events, incidents or population etc. as directed by an evolving theory, that is analytical grounds rather than by predetermined dimensions is called theoretical sampling; and is a pivotal strategy in a grounded theory methodology (Draucker et al., 2007; Glaser, 1978). Simultaneous data collection and analysis was, therefore, going on all of the time as interesting initial coding ideas and words emerged, and it is this concept that makes GT different from other methodologies (Birks & Mills, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At the next level of coding, I identified underlying uniformities, universal themes and grouped the related first level coding into categories.

I compared the coded categories to one another, and through continuing theoretical sampling I added to the empirical evidence. This process represented another tenant of GTM, that of constant comparison both within the data and to other data categories so facilitating a continuous interplay between data collection and analysis (Draucker et al., 2007; Urquhart et al., 2009). I actively engaged with it and through continuous theoretical sampling following up leads considered significant by the participants that hadn't been thought of before. This immersion in the data demonstrated what is another key feature of GT, that of
‘theoretical sensitivity’. Where through the personal quality of the researcher an awareness of the subtleties of the data is demonstrated, and the resulting theory sensitive to the data as discovered during the research (Corbin & Strauss, 1978; Glaser, 1978). To have had insight that refers to:

- the ability to give meaning to data;
- the capacity to understand;
- the ability to separate what is pertinent in the enquiry from anything that is not pertinent to the research.

The coding itself was emergent and as it progressed, as categories were compared to one another and combined into focused ones. Data was coded and interpreted not just by 1st level coding but up to 2nd level perceptions. Links and relationships were identified between them and become theoretical codes as they “weave the fractured story back together” (Glaser, 1978:72). There was a continuous interplay between data collection and analysis. All steps recorded through ‘memoing’- the writing up of ideas and reasons for relationships between categories, connections to literature, indeed anything deemed as important. Glaser and Strauss, the GTM fathers, both acknowledge that the researcher need not have entered the field with no prior knowledge but as emergent theory starts to come out then literature of close relevance to be used as additional data (Heath & Cowley, 2004; Strauss, 1987). I also stayed in the field (going back into web-based discussion sites, though not as a participant) collecting and analysing data until no new information came through, in a GT tenet activity termed theoretical saturation. The whole process of obtaining, systematically and carefully conceptualising is what makes GT different to other qualitative methods. It has provided here a rigorous foundation on which I have built my conceptual theory.
The overview of the grounded theory methodology presented here and how it has been applied reflects the origins in what has been called the 1st generation of GT. Also known as the ‘classic' approach as initially developed by Glaser and Strauss, and continued and refined by Glaser to be a prescribed set of classic grounded theory research methods. I present a brief overview of those approaches to building up the context as to why I used the methodology of the (objectivist) first generation of GT as developed by its founders Glaser and Strauss (1967) and then by Charmaz (2000, 2006) into a second-generation constructivist form. I also argue why I did not follow instead the divergent GT paradigm by Strauss and Corbin (1987) and their preconceived coding categories.

3.12.1 Grounded theory – 1st generation from a positivist perspective, the classic approach

Grounded theory has been discussed up to now in this chapter as a general methodology used within a qualitative study but when first presented by Glaser and Strauss in their seminal text ‘The discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research of 1967 it was talked about in the context of strategies and techniques as methods. It had come about and developed by these researchers to counter the movement at the time of the 1960s that research in the social sciences at that time was mostly about the verification of theory from past studies, grand or otherwise or its development through (logical) deductive scientific methods; rather than through the data itself.

There was a culture of ‘physics envy’ at that time meaning that the standards of quantitative research were applied to requirements of ‘good science' should be adhered to; they did not necessarily apply in the context of the realities and complexity of social phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). They sought to
develop methods to build a theory out of qualitative data and to explore new areas not covered by theories existing at that time. GT was established through their sociological research program to be predominantly empirical and inductive acting only on what the data showed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The methodology was concerned with the generation of theory directly from what the data presented, which explained as much as possible with also as few concepts as possible. The primary concern is that of identification of the core variable coming from the data as presented by the people providing that data and as such were not topics as preconceived by the researcher. The resulting concepts that did emerge were my own as generated from the data, to repeat, “instead of using and probably forcing the received concepts of others” (Glaser, 2002:23). This approach brought in another aspect of the classic grounded theory, to minimise, to suspend previous knowledge and preconceptions in the face of what is being revealed in the data, which is opposite to a dominant positivist and rationale approach; and is what caused a storm back in the 1960s amongst the academic field.

Classic grounded theory continues to be developed by Glaser as a coding toolbox. Whereas Strauss, together with Juliet Corbin in their first publication of 1987 gave more guidance and detail to the process of grounded theory in answer to students' requests for ‘how to' do grounded theory. Their subsequent publications have built on this - two levels of coding expanded into three, and this highlighted a divergence in coding approaches, which reached public announcement in the academic field.

3.12.2 Grounded theory split

Strauss and Corbin's approaches to GT along with their discussion about the timing of a literature review were regarded by the academic audience as a ‘split'.
But it was really about Glaser proclaiming that the new approaches announced by Strauss and then Strauss & Corbin (1987, 1990) shouldn’t be claimed as grounded theory but called something else. It was a different methodology Glaser said that should be given a different name. In subsequent texts co-authored by Strauss and Juliet Corbin starting with Basics of Qualitative Research, 1990 grounded theory was talked about more as a methodology, giving rise to Glaser forcibly announcing that what had been produced was more of “densely codified operation” (Goulding, 1999:4). Where Glaser continued with the classic approach and extending grounded theory by explaining in more detail the concepts of theoretical sampling, theoretical coding and memos; Strauss in collaboration with Juliet Corbin (1990) in their version of grounded theory focused on analytic techniques and giving guides to novice researchers by providing a paradigm.

3.12.3 Strauss & Corbin’s grounded theory

“A core variable is identified from the data but a later stage than the classic approach, to sum or integrate the findings” Strauss & Corbin, (1998: 143-161).

Strauss and Corbin claimed that their grounded theory version was superior to the classic approach of Strauss (1967) because it was easier to interpret data through the lenses of a pre-determined theoretical perspective and from predefined variables. A somewhat appealing approach because, when following the Glaser way of constructing concepts, it is a time-consuming process to go through since data are being continuously compared. Also, ”all ideas generated must be verified by all data and categories are constantly refitted” Glaser, 1978 as cited in (Heath & Cowley, 2004:144). Induction, within classic GT, is regarded as the significant process, through which the significant problems and
theory emerge from the data; by the researcher staying open to what the data has to say and thus carrying no preconceptions or assumptions. Whereas in the approach of Strauss and Corbin (1987) there is a pre-set set coding paradigm applied, where deduction and verification dominate the process. It is also more restricted because concepts are generated that fit within a narrow range of theoretical codes (coding families). That is a prescribed set of research procedures, a series of 18 theoretical coding families that include categories of analysis under headings such as his ‘Six Cs: Causes, Contexts, Contingencies, Consequences, Covariances and Conditions’ (Glaser, 1978:74). Whereas in classic GT theoretical codes may range from 40–many hundreds as has been the case in my study where I initially generated 400 nodes from the data.

The mechanics of coding and the number of levels and approaches used can come from either Glaser or Strauss or Corbin. I was in a search for a whole methodology, one that had a philosophical foundation. The general opinion is that GTM can underpin both a constructivist and objectivist study in its methods, it carries no philosophical baggage. I have a constructivist epistemology coming from an interpretivist theoretical perspective, and this is reflected in the ‘flavour’ of the grounded theory methodology I used. One that coheres more with the GTM 2nd generation because it has a constructivist philosophical underpinning, one that is cognitively based (Charmaz, 2006; Hutchison, Johnston, & Breckon, 2011; Piaget, 1969). I considered this to be in keeping with the grounded theory methodology as espoused by Cathy Charmaz “we stand within the research process rather than above, before, or outside it” (Charmaz, 2006:180). The 2nd generation flavour of grounded theory methodology is more suitable than the classic 1st generation approach. With the choice of 2nd generation constructivist
grounded theory, I look at everyone's vantage point and make their interpretations and implications explicit, to understand the nuances and tone of what their narratives say.

3.13 Grounded theory – 2nd generation

The work of Charmaz, 2006 adopts an emphasis on constructivism and to acknowledge that a researcher does get involved in the interpretive research process.

“…….Constructivism assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward an interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings”. (Charmaz, 2000:510)

It accommodates the non-classic approach to theory in that an understanding rather than an explanation of theory is sought which I gain from my interpretation of the phenomena under study. Glaser wasn't it seems too happy about this stance because he re-emphasises that GT can use any data “There is no such thing for GT as bias data or subjective or objective data or misinterpreted data. It is what the researcher is receiving, as a pattern, and as a human being (which is inescapable). It just depends on the research”(Glaser, 2002b:1). Going on to say that ‘constructivist' GT is just a way of researchers' not having to explain their bias! Well, in this work I am making clear my reflexive position. Where it is made explicit is that I was firmly embedded in this study from a social constructivist mind-set to examine the psychological experience of organisational misfit, arising from dyadic interactions and the context that comes with it as constructed in one's mind. What it feels like to be one, what or who triggers that feeling and what might be the possible outcomes to self or the organisation.
Where through a constructivist GT there is an examination of the nuanced understanding of the lived experience which I argue can be detected within narrative by a researcher who knows the situational context of the workplace, such as myself. Researcher bias, however, is tempered through the transparency of the GT methodology its coding processes and discussion with PhD supervisors. GTM is not without its criticisms and limitations. The main issues that are raised are that:

- GTM is about induction and that it pays insufficient attention to the role of the researcher.
- Whatever emerges from a field through observation depends on the observer’s position within it.
- GTM does not address questions of reflexivity satisfactorily (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

The data collection came from what people said, and I examined and coded the meanings that people constructed through the 2nd generation GTM lens of constructivism which addresses the reflexivity of the researcher (Charmaz, 2006). I have explicitly set out my position, see section Critical reflection 3.7 Moreover, the transparent approach of GTM has also been of support because the misfit research study has not followed any established frameworks and routines from research into PE fit. It is in the category of nascent-theory, building ‘tentative answers to novel questions of how and why’ and therefore open to great scrutiny on how knowledge is gathered and dealt with from interviewees in open-ended enquiry interviews (Edmondson & Mcmanus, 2007:1158). The GTM approach as I present is very defensible in that it has produced a quality chain of evidence and is ‘absolutely grounded’ in the findings and reflects my part in the research.
Moreover, it has rigour in that the research framework includes a philosophical position as consistent with GTM, through a research paradigm that demonstrates a coherent ontological and epistemological value set. The application of a grounded theory methodology as the best way of drawing out and demonstrating the rich, textured and elaborate description of misfits lived experiences is now presented through the choice of data collection and analysis methods.

3.14 Methods of data collection

Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews with individuals offered a good way of eliciting a detailed understanding of the context in which people constructed their perceptions of misfit (Marschan-Piekkari, 2004). They fitted in well with a grounded theory approach, to inductively develop a theory by listening to people without a preconceived structure. Because, as already mentioned, the literature does not have a definition of misfit to confirm or disconfirm, so allowing people to describe what misfit feels like for them is the most logical approach towards answering the questions of this research. Thus, regarding gathering data, I needed to use a qualitative method or methods that encouraged people to convey their perceptions and feelings, to enable me to develop concepts and categories for investigation.

3.14.1 Finding the misfits

One way of discovering people who feel as they misfit is to approach organisations with a view to speaking to employees about how and why they misfit at work. However, talking to HR managers made it clear that institutions do not admit to having misfits (private conversations with HR managers) because that would mean that they have failed to recruit people who fit with the
organisation. To find misfits via this route was therefore difficult, to bring them forward to talk securely about their psychological state in a secure and trusting environment. I thought that people who had already left a source of employment would feel comfortable about talking about their experience. A class of 60 international Masters of Business Administration (MBA) students at Coventry University UK agreed to share their recollections where they had felt in an affective state of misfit. Ethics approval (reference P18524) (Appendices) was obtained and an online discussion forum set up to which the mature students contributed their thoughts. These were used in creating a poster to attract more people around the university to come forward and be interviewed.

A few people did respond to the poster invitation about ‘are you a misfit’ at an in-faculty conference. The interviewees then gave names of other people to call upon as possible hidden and covert misfits. This process of connecting to ‘people who know people who know people who know what cases are information-rich’ termed snowball sampling proved to be very useful in suggesting topics to look out for in subsequent data collection and analysis (Draucker et al., 2007). I also used my network to talk with people who might consider themselves a misfit. They were prepared to talk about their experiences but worried that their stories would be made public, and to suffer further malalignment at work.

Through face to face and recorded interviews the interviewees all identified aspects of their job about interactions with their supervisors (line managers) as being problematic. These people had already worked in their organisations for several years or more, and who considered themselves as hardworking and loyal employees. The sample, however, was too small to be purposive so I sought an
approach to seek out a more extensive and more diverse pool of contributors. I considered that alumni of my university would be an ideal pool of candidates to approach. A flyer asking for contributions to research in the field of Industrial Organisational Behaviour (I/O) to better understand the concept of ‘misfit’ as opposed to fit, was sent to 3,500 alumni of Coventry University; but out of 95 views, there was only one respondent. One is not enough; fifty people’s opinions and thoughts would be far better as well as being across a range of job descriptions, ages, and industries and geographical regions. I could have gone back into field with say a paid advertisement openly asking for misfits and directing them into a closed discussion forum to get more respondents, but I did not have the resources to do that. I sought a more direct approach to connect with people who had something to say about organisational misfit or features related to it, and did so by calling for help on ‘misfit’ interpretations via a social media platform such as Facebook.

I set up a Facebook (FB) discussion forum and 100 people from my FB and LinkedIn contacts list were asked to join. Only four people made comments, and that was in respect of previous employment where there was no danger of being dismissed now for their sometimes-derogatory opinions of the organisation or specific people within it. The threat of being identified by your employer and fired was very real and was apparent in the guarded comments that were made (Cochran, 2008; Crane, 2012; Trottman, 2011). To overcome the possible problem of people not wanting to be ‘public’ in their commentary I set up a closed community via WordPress to get some ideas of what people were talking about around misfit. Again, there were people unwilling to share their feelings in public
forum, so I interviewed them separately, face to face or online. Such reservations are shown in Appendix B.

To overcome the limitations, I faced in finding misfits through traditional means, I turned to the internet. By searching internet search engines across UK, USA, and Australia to identify public discussion threads where people were talking (in English) about ‘misfit’ in an organisational context. I looked towards the internet to connect to computer-mediated communities (CMC) now termed at 2015 as ‘social media’. These being digital platforms, which since the introduction of Web 2.0 can facilitate content generated by any user, the real-time actions of sharing and collaboration around information; as well as being a medium for expressing thoughts around a plethora of issues (Elefant, 2011; McFarland & Ployhart, 2015). Such is the “human desire for connectivity and technology” (McFarland & Ployhart, 2015:1653). They have become a rich minefield of data for researchers outside of just marketing, but the approach brings with it a need to understand whether information proffered by bloggers is distorted because of fears around personal presentation.

I shall now explore issues of personal presentation on social media from the commonly used terms in academic papers, that of ‘online self-presentation’ or ‘self-presentation on social media’ to see whether empirical research from other studies offered any information in my understanding of what ‘misfits’ were saying, starting with a look at how social media and discussion forums arose and what sites were best to use where people were unlikely to present a polished and false picture of themselves.
3.15 Self-presentation on social media

The Internet has provided new ways of gathering a wealth of unsolicited data from naturally occurring interactions in the form of social media products such as websites, blogs, and online discussion forums (Jowett, 2015; Lamerichs & Molder, 2003). Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications as built upon Web 2.0 technologies and foundations that allowed the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (USG) (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). That started off back in 2000, and since then social networking sites have grown exponentially year on year, and now stands at 1.9 billion users Worldwide and revolutionising the way that people connect, communicate and develop relationships (McFarland & Ployhart, 2015; Statista, 2017).

Social media these days is taken to be virtual content sharing sites such as social networks (Facebook), blogs or reviews on particular subjects. Within Social Media there are various types of platforms such as Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn and Second Life to name but a few. People use these to create, modify, share, and discuss Internet content (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). The most popular social media site is Facebook, and it is a ‘closed’ group requiring membership where one signs up with name, address, age and a plethora of other personal details. A person only shares their personal profiles, status updates, pictures and written posts with permitted friends and family and as such, presents an online image, that is often tweaked to display a positive aspect that can be scrutinised and admired, so leading to psychological wellbeing (Vogel & Rose, 2016). The likes of sites such as Facebook offers to its users an avenue towards their positive self-presentation (Nadkarni & Hofmann,
2012). The fact that people often only select the most positive aspects of their lives with the result that to others that they are unrealistically happy is not discussed here because I was seeking online sites where people were presenting/talking about the ‘real’ them. This needed to be adults who were at work, mindful I was also about people showing a less than perfect image of self-presentation (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008). In addition, postings from the privacy savvy would not reveal much of oneself or of negative feelings, especially about an employing organisation for fear of reprisal or censure (Doyle, 2014; Rains & Scott, 2007; Spinelli, 2010). Anonymous blog sites, ones that do not require ‘sign up’ with personal details or sites offer then a chance of anonymity, and the opportunity to construct different perhaps multiple online identities. Going some way to mediate problems people may have had around self-presentation when talking about sensitive or painful feelings. These are the websites that I chose to start off my search to find organisational misfits.

3.16 Internet sites examined

The internet sites I examined had the benefit of being in the public domain, that is not requiring registration and monitoring by a webmaster to join, and not populated by diversionary commercial advertisements or sponsorship. This second-best solution as suggested by Langer & Beckman, (2005), to go to where the informants are likely to be and have trust in has turned out to be most informative; and probably not second best. This approach has connected to the here and now of what people are feeling on aspects around misfit that are important to them in the workplace – if the sometimes detailed and heartfelt comments are anything to go by. These threads, lines of thought, might have only existed for a day or two but I captured them for the relevance of the content. The
search terms I used across the 'Google' search engines building upon words that people in the pilot sample sets already mentioned were:

- Lack of fit
- Ostracised from work, because of misfit
- Excluded at work
- Misfit at work
- Corporate misfit
- I can’t fit in
- I feel like an outsider
- Dysfunctional organisational culture, misfit
- Organisational misfit
- I do not fit
- Misfit with the organisation
- I do not fit in at work
- I have never fitted in at work
- I wish that I fitted in at work
- Isolated at work
- Alienation
- Workplace alienation

As I examined each forum, I snowballed off discussants’ new phrases around misfit into further searches. I was able therefore to build an initial level of coding to determine core categories of interest that required additional data collection and analysis thereon. Some people suffering misfit at work made themselves known through their commentary about what was happening at work and how they felt about misfitting experiences. I took these as a subset of misfits
who chosen to be vocal in publicising their feelings. Confidentiality and anonymity of informants to this study was of prime importance. To that end, the procedures set down by the University's Ethics Committee for face to face, and online interviews were followed. As the data collection process developed onto the internet and into discussion message boards the Ethics issue was reviewed again in December 2014.

3.17 Ethics

Part of the social research here comes from examining web-based online discussion message boards and community discussions. Such a methodology is interpreted as covert research as presented by (Kozinets, 2002) the author of Netnography “based primarily on the observation of textual discourse” through non-participant observation. Conversations and sometimes just ‘one-liners’ as expressions of someone’s feelings around the topic of misfit were ‘scraped’ from such websites by the researcher for this study. Even though the information is in public domain (not requiring membership to a closed community for example) there was the issue of Ethics and integrity of using such information without permissions to consider. Using as a reference point the paper ”But the data is already public”: on the ethics of research in Facebook (Zimmer, 2010) consideration was given to whether any of the data could be traced back to the original author or their personal profile details obtained. The answer is ‘no’ because all discussants used pseudonyms.

To reflect more up to date approaches on the ethical question around the use of discussion fora’ information, a question on this issue was posed to attendees of the 13th European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies (ECRM 2014). The answer to the use of data from the web
scraping activity of Netnography is that it is acceptable as long as a Code of Conduct is followed. The purpose of guidelines issued by the Association of Internet Research was suggested as well as some relevant other papers—the Facebook one (Zimmer, 2010), but regarded as not the same in this case because personal details are not available or captured through the online blogs.

The consensus from academics in the field of ethics as demonstrated through the Research Methods Special Interest Group is that if online phenomena are publicly accessible— if it can be accessed by anyone with an open internet connection, then necessarily it is in the public domain. Moreover, in the spirit of scholarly development, the information displayed need not have consent attached to it or a need for anonymising the participants (Rosenberg, 2010). However, there is a second argument that considers that although online data is regarded as accessible’ a general public audience may not be the intended audience. This position might include researchers so that ethical considerations about participants' expectations of privacy need to be addressed and data safeguarded. Furthermore, if the researcher took part in an online communities' discourse then there would be factors of intrusion and exposure to consider, and consideration as to what is public and what is private along with copyright issues (Berry, 2004; Rosenberg, 2010). This though is not the case here.

The process of carrying out netnological methods (to capture commentary from websites in action called data scrapping) on 60 websites for scholarly research on misfit was discussed with the Head of Coventry University Ethics Committee, who required me to check on the terms and conditions of each internet site. The results were that all the information used in this research found through a Google.com search and retrieved from sites required no log-ins. It was,
therefore, freely available and thus in the public domain. Google does have a privacy policy (Google, 2014) however in addition to its safeguards it implements the May 2014 Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) decision on the right to be forgotten. Where this is applied then all information about the person who wants to be forgotten is removed and wouldn't, therefore, have been able for anyway for research purposes.

Given stricter controls on the use of what could be construed as private data within Coventry University protocols, a new Ethics application was submitted which gave details as to the process followed for the Netnography phase. This started in December 2013, where all information, postings, comments, and blogs I collected from sites and fora did not require login/membership. Discussants’ private data such as name, address, socio-demographic profiles and other such details which would have been fabulous to have for research purposes is protected within each site’s security protocols and was not available for public use. Postings, along with the monikers that discussants gave themselves were data scraped after checking each site’s legal disclaimers and regulations about their take on research and using data from their websites for research purposes.

*Table 3 Results of Netnography* describes all websites captured which had no restriction on the use of information and comments posted therein.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title from Nivo</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Website Privacy Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Already feel like an outcast at my new job - Social Anxiety Forum</td>
<td><a href="http://www.socialanxietysupport.com/privacy/">http://www.socialanxietysupport.com/privacy/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And Feeling like an outcast at work~ - Social Anxiety Forum</td>
<td><a href="https://help.disqus.com/customer/portal/articles/466259-privacy-policy">https://help.disqus.com/customer/portal/articles/466259-privacy-policy</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disqus Comments</td>
<td></td>
<td>Information posted in Public Fora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Keep a Job, You Need to Fit Into the Work Culture</td>
<td><a href="http://www.slideshare.net/barnesdorf/to-">http://www.slideshare.net/barnesdorf/to-</a></td>
<td><a href="https://www.linkedin.com/legal/privacy-policy">https://www.linkedin.com/legal/privacy-policy</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.1. Consent to LinkedIn Processing Information About You</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The personal information that you provide to us may reveal or allow others to identify aspects of your life that are not expressly stated on your profile (for example, your picture or your name may show your gender). By providing personal information to us when you create or update your account and profile, you are expressly and voluntarily accepting the terms and conditions of our User Agreement and freely accepting and agreeing to our processing of your personal information in ways set out by this Privacy Policy. Supplying to us any information deemed “sensitive” by applicable law is entirely voluntary on your part.

INFJ Feeling like I don't fit in at work.

Consent
If you do not consent to the collection, use or disclosure of your personal information as outlined in this statement, please do not provide any personal information to VerticalScope.

Trouble fitting in with coworkers — Ask a Manager
Blog. Comments but no privacy statement.

The Trouble With Hanging On To Workplace Misfits ~ LinkedIn
http://profitandleadership.blogspot.co.uk/2014/02/the-trouble-with-hanging-on-to.html
Blog. No comments made.

Judith Johnson~ Ever Feel Like You're On The Outside Looking In~ How To Change That
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/judith-johnson/outside-looking-in_b_806005.html
Blog. No comments made.

http://privacy.aol.com/privacy-policy/
When You Just Don't Fit In At The Office - Forbes

Even if this data is in the public domain, such forums will usually have legal disclaimers and rules about their take on research and using data from their websites for purposes.

Ethics approval for this research approach under project reference P30776 was granted on 8th January 2015.
3.18 Data captured

I uploaded the interview transcripts, and text from the purposeful discussion fora into NVivo 11, as well as the websites, found using the word strings as criteria from English speaking search engines as already previously itemised. The sites in the results list were chosen in a systematic manner following on from words and phrases used in the pilot interviews with six individuals who had experience of feeling like or witnessing organisational misfit. I examined the content of the sites to identify narratives that had a work context and connected to people at work. I initially captured fifty-five internet websites for all their discussion content using the NCapture function within NVivo 11 so that I could code them.

3.19 Profile of the online participants

I did for the attributes of the people on the final number of sixty websites, (see Figure 4 Attributes for profiling) where given, to see whether I could deduce anything about the participants from the information they gave about themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion forum join date</th>
<th>Number of posts to forum</th>
<th>gender</th>
<th>race</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>geographical location</th>
<th>job type</th>
<th>industry</th>
<th>socio economic class</th>
<th>Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 4 Attributes for profiling

There was not enough information provided by anyone that could usefully be used for analysis (see appendix C). I couldn’t even determine the split between male and female.

3.20 The NVivo 11 coding process

At its heart, NVivo 11 works on a system of ‘code’ and ‘retrieve’; useful information to the study is coded (highlighted in the source material) and saved in a ‘Node’ within NVivo 11 for retrieval at a later stage in the project. Nodes are thus, storage vessels for ideas, concepts and themes and information sourced from
across various sources (i.e. interviews, web fora). Through the process of coding, I collected these ideas and managed their organisation with a node hierarchy within NVivo 11. It is, of course, I that interpreted the data, decided what to code, and how to use this computer program to maximise efficiency in all processes. Moreover, as asserted by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), the value of researchers' using their experiences to inform the development of a grounded theory project is useful so long as the researcher remains 'open-minded' to what participants say – a computer package can't do this for you. For this study, I couldn't assign any attributes to each source of data such as age, culture, gender, job role, length of tenure, type of employer, geographical location because such information was not available. It would, of course, have been useful to interrogate the final data for particular variables for categorisation purposes, but it was not possible to capture them. Moreover, taking advice from the paper of Hutchison, Johnston, & Breckon, (2010) the assignment of attributes at early stages might be at odds with the iterative nature of grounded theory.

I took a non-formulaic and non-prescriptive approach to the data gathered, to conduct a truly realistic analysis of it. To analyse the data for what it said, in the true spirit of a grounded theory methodology, oddities and expressions of unexpected emotions and thoughts notwithstanding. Not only from one person’s point of view but from that of others who commented on the posting, and who often proposed different interpretations as well as advice. This meant that just from one posting many and often opposing coding categories developed. Coding is about “attaching labels to segments of data that depict what each segment is about” (Charmaz, 2006:3)
To highlight the deep level and range of analysis conducted here is a coding process of a posting. One of the fora had a discussion thread under a heading: “can anyone tell me why I always feel like the outcast?” The narrative presented was:

“I am sick of feeling this way, and I mostly hold it inside and let it fester away at me, so here goes. I am sick of always feeling like the outcast, and I’m not even sure why it keeps happening. At my old job, I worked with two guys, three girls and two middle-aged women. I got along with all of them, but the three girls were a complete clique and would always go for lunch, walks, etc. together and get together outside work. I would chat with them and have decent conversations, but I was never “one of the gang.” Never went out with them outside work, though they did all come to a housewarming party I had a couple years ago. I’m going to be 30 years old next year, and I still feel like the helpless little junior high girl who’s just trying to fit in and can’t manage to do it and feels like crap because everyone else is having fun without her and doesn’t care. Argh!. I don’t feel pathetic--until other people make me feel that way”

I coded the commentary for the points made, several of which fell under an initial (also known as the open or 1st level) category ‘feels sick inside at being an outcast’. That initial category included descriptions made by the poster of how and why (she) felt that way, the people involved and the organisational situations in which interactions took place as well as the context around them. The purpose of the coding even at this initial stage was not to be descriptive but to have an eye for the concepts that were emerging, to seek to take into account “What is this data a study of?”, ‘What category does this incident indicate?’, ‘What is actually happening in the data?’, ‘What is the main concern being faced by the
participants?’, and ‘What accounts for the continual resolving of this concern?’ (Glaser, 1998:140).

At the next round of coding I moved the subtitle category into a focused level category named ‘Outside position – group influence’. That, however, does not show the full range of the coding words I gave to represent all of the thoughts and opinions around that particular post, to demonstrate the constant comparative analysis method of grounded theory that was applied. To do so meant analysing other posts around that presented by poster one. There followed on from that initial posting, comments and advice from others, sometimes resonating with the highlighted interactions because of own life experience such as:

“Hiya Chigal..I can TOTALLY relate. Don’t beat yourself up though. I doubt it’s ANYthing to do with you at all. I have rarely had close female friends..but the truth is I don't trust women much as far as friendship goes... Do you REALLY want to be part of a "clique"??”. The initial coding for the first part of this particular statement was entitled ‘don’t trust women as work friends’. The latter part “Do you REALLY want to be part of a "clique"??” was put under an initial code that I had already formed from previous coding sweep ‘cliques are so high school'. There followed a statement from another poster: “I agree with Lady Bugg. There are heaps of girls at my work who sick together, theres like 5 of them in a group. They go out together, have lunch together and gossip together. I talk to them, but to be honest its better to be out of the group, especially in at a workplace” the tone of this statement resonates with the previous one, which had thrown derision (an action in coding terms) towards formed groups of people (women) in the workplace by seeing them as a problem vis a vis organisational relationships. Yet a subsequent poster didn't view groups of female co-workers in
the same way: Hey chigal28! I totally understand how you feel! I'm in a somewhat a similar situation at work. I'd say don't stress over it. You'll have other friends outside of work that you can hang out with and getting too buddy-buddy with coworkers might not always be a good thing. A lot of the female coworkers at my work talks a lot of trash behind each other's' backs, so sometimes I'm glad that I'm not involved in all that sh*t.” For a few of the statements I coded them under previous headings, some from the original poster, for others, new codes were generated to reflect all of the sentiments expressed in this post which did not cohere had already gone before. Nor did they connect to subsequent posters' expressions. For example, the next poster presented a diametric viewpoint: “At my work now I am friendly with the gals there. But really I am there to do my job and when I leave I leave the job and everything about it there. So what! If they want to have their "clique" let them. Its not anything against you or who you are as a person. Yes, it sucks and sorry you have to work with those type gals but dont discount friendships with women because of a few gals at work. trust in women and work and personal life are separate”. This statement required a whole new set of codes to reflect a different line of thought that was emerging. A process that I repeated in the final commentary to the thread of discussion. It was from the original poster in which they presented a previously unrevealed point, as well as being one that has not been mentioned explicitly in previous fit literature. That of reflecting on workplace interactions feelings and thoughts formed from prior childhood experiences: “Thanks, everyone, for your thoughtful responses. I guess what's really my problem with all this is that when I was in elementary school and junior high I was always the really short girl with glasses, and to top it off we moved
every three years, so I felt like I was always, ALWAYS just trying to fit in. I always made good friends everywhere we went, but the so-called "cool kids" made my life hell. Fast forward 20 years.....ridiculous as it sounds, people like the girls at work (my old job AND my new job) still manage to make me feel like that insecure little girl again!!! Like the reason I don't fit in is because I'm not as good as them somehow, not worthy of being accepted. Which is crap!!! And the insecurities this is bringing to the surface is starting to affect the relationships I have with the friends that I DO care about....I feel like I'm just a big ball of neediness and I wouldn't want to be around me!!!!”.

By examining not only one person’s thoughts but those of others around one point enabled me to employ the method of constant comparison, to compare empirical indicators as expressed through the words and views of posters and their respondents for similarities and differences (Draucker et al., 2007; Strauss, 1987). Giving rise to me coding the thread into 22 nodes of different titles to which I allocated a further 63 references. From one posting alone I obtained a great richness of experiences from several different viewpoints to one situation. These actions represented a genuinely iterative approach as well as a well-founded and critical approach which I applied in a massive examination sweep of the data and classified it to a point where it made sense. I now present the process of data analysis, the coding through the hierarchical levels of GTM leading towards the presentation of concepts and relationships among them, to be taken forward into theory development in chapter 5.

3.21 Data analysis & coding levels

There are terms used by the different applications of grounded theory as developed from its first presentation to qualitative researchers in 1967 by Glaser
& Strauss, through to the 2nd generation constructivist philosophical underpinning of grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006). In this approach, my analysis includes commentary from everyone's vantage point in an attempt to take into account and understand the full range of nuances and tone of what is presented. My overarching aim is to identify concepts where they are determined from distinct events in the data as early on as possible. To “uncover relationships among categories . . . by answering the questions of who, when, why, how, and with what consequences . . . to relate structure with process” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:127).

3.21.1 The first order coding process – initial/open

Initial coding of both interview transcriptions and online postings took the form of initial coding, which involved fracturing the data, line by line to examine the text for topics that related to the areas of research interest. By breaking down the text line by line I sought to “expose the thoughts, ideas and meanings contained therein” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 102). To identify distinct units of meaning, sometimes in ways that “may not have occurred to the participants” (Charmaz, 2006:55). By looking at the data line by line within the context of a whole statement or topic of discussion, I coded the meaning behind the narrative. At the same time, this initial coding step required the use of the constant comparative method, to group and conceptually labels similar data and to identify concepts as identified from distinct events in the data. So, seeking to make analytical sense of the narratives, even if they challenged taken for granted understandings from the fit/misfit literature.

I examined each sentence of text in the content of the full narrative/paragraph/posting for relevance in the context of what was already
known from the literature about misfit. Not much, however, is known about misfit, so I remained ‘open' to whatever the discussants regarded as important about their feelings and thoughts about not fitting in. I coded the data in terms that represented "…the actions and processes ‘that represented participants’ misfit feelings and the connections that they regarded as important (Charmaz, 2006:69). For example, there is presented below a selection of how I coded the data at this open/initial level. The fifty-three pages of the full coding of the 400 nodes are presented in a report titled ‘Coding Summary by Node’ as available at Appendix A. There follow now some examples of the coding process.

I coded the following statements as ‘company had two images' because of the distinctly different departments involved. The image which changes depending on what department and nature of staff was involved.

"The image of the textile business was that it was a department made up of hairy arsed Northerners such as myself (I have a PhD in chemistry), and 2, the new technology-driven paint division populated by a posh guys from independent schools all motivated by sales – this department was more about marketing paint products than anything else."

The following statements were coded as ‘misfits can still fit in.’

I think the beauty of being a misfit lies in the fact that despite being different, u somehow manage to fit! even if it means having to create your own zone or doing your own thing which then sets a trend,
‘Fitting in’ is often tied to looking and sounding like you fit in. In other words, fake it until you make it.

What jumps out at me are the words you’re using in your posts: afraid, hate, trapped, fear. It’s dangerous to allow this train of thought to be the basis of your conscious actions. Over the years, my reactions to AS caused me to withdraw and be fearful of all social situations. I was very negative. I’m a little more positive and better able to take a step back, relax, and be resolute -- don’t let the past and fear of the future rule the present. It’s a game. Play along as best you can. You don’t need to win every time.

The following statements were coded as ‘does not fit in’.

“...everyone wanted to be in everyone’s business and gossip about last weekend’s party and takes shots in the freezer room I was not interested in any of this and was fired for having a "poor attitude".....

So there are always going to be some new hires that in due time reveal themselves as inappropriate to the requirements and spirit of your workplace culture.

However, I feel like I just don’t fit in here. There are only 11 people that work here and it has a "family ‘vibe. My office is on the end, so a lot of the chatter and "plan-making” are done far away from me. I always feel like I’m the last to know about things and that my opinions don’t matter.
Hiya Chigal..I can TOTALLY relate. Don't beat yourself up though. I doubt it's ANYthing to do with you at all. I have rarely had close female friends. But the truth is I don't trust women much as far as friendship goes.

From a business owners point of view, I think professional relationships should remain professional...period. It just cuts out a lot of unnecessary drama. Do you REALLY want to be part of a "clique"?? I never did. It was just so...highschool. You said you are almost 30. I think by 30 trying to 'fit in''should be the least of your priorities. Focus on being a leader...someone everyone else wants to follow.

Try to cultivate friendships OUTSIDE of work. Believe me...your life will be SO much smoother. Besides....I know from experience. When you go out with people from work, ALL they tend to do is gossip about. What else? Work. Yuck.

I don't mind working in my new department; we are a very small company after all with all departments in the same room but my three colleagues I work with (my manager is the exception) really hate me.

Where a person/(s) described an interaction or situation that highlighted something that about a lack of ‘fit' then I coded the words on the basis of ‘in vivo' words. These included the actual phrases, terms, descriptions and feelings about people's life in their workplace as presented by them. Other coding involved having an open mind on what people had to say about their experiences, the
objective being to develop concepts from the data rather than from preconceived
models, theories, or hypotheses from the fit or misfit literature. The interpretation
however of each statement made by a web discussant, where not coded in vivo,
lay firmly in my hands.

That is not to say that I ignored discipline-based knowledge and experience.
Indeed, Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) encouraged the use of this knowledge as
long as it fits the data and is not incorrectly applied to it. Where I made
connections to existing literature I recorded this action in memos and the
academic journal held within NVivo 11. During the initial coding activity, I
generated abbreviated codes to match the data, achieving a total of more than 400
open-codes, that is, the first-order codes as representing discussants' statements.
Active codes were applied, to look at their thoughts, feelings, values, viewpoints
and assertions rather than just gathering facts and describing scenarios.

3.21.2 Reviewing and refining the open codes

I then examined these initial/open codes for duplications and topics in a
similar theme and merged them to avoid duplication. In this process, I generated a
final total of 362 nodes, which in the language of CAQDAS are defined as ‘a
collection of references about a specific theme, place, person or another area of
interest’. I itemise these at Appendix B (12 pages). I show a screenshot of some
of the initial unstructured 362 Open codes (called nodes in NVivo 11) at the
broadest level of analysis on the following page.
3.21.3 Example of coding at its broadest level

Obtained from the first sweep of the data, giving rise to emergent coding to encapsulate the sentiments as coming from the discussants’ commentary (see Figure 5 Coding at its broadest level - 1).

Further examination and cross-comparison led me to the second order of coding as shown in Table 4 Focused coding - 2nd order coding:
Table 4 Focused coding - 2nd order coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description of activity</th>
<th>Misfit PhD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Focused coding</td>
<td>13 Core categories, reduced to 10 and then 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phase</td>
<td>Reduction and clustering of categories (paradigm model)</td>
<td>Three hierarchical levels (Parent, Child and Grandchild nodes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This second primary phase in coding goes under several names depending upon which school of GT is being used, focused or intermediate being such examples. My study is guided in the coding phases by the work of Charmaz who incorporates the classic GT work of (Glaser, 1978, 1992). Where, in my researcher position I stay open to the data, rather than approaching it with a pre-set coding paradigm such as that proposed by (Corbin & Strauss, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data was very much examined in a bottom-up approach, to see what the data was ‘saying' rather approaching it with pre-set categories or framework or indeed the thesis's research objectives. In the constructivist approach of Charmaz's grounded theory, I focused on the importance of meanings that participants attribute when discussing the dimensions around misfit.

The activity of the 2nd level was about developing individual categories by connecting sub-categories and common themes to ‘fully developing the range of properties and their dimensions’ and then to connecting them together,’ (Birks & Mills, 2011:12). Thus, to build ‘a dense texture of relationships around the axis of a category' (Charmaz, 2006:93). Focused coding relates categories to sub-
categories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a class, and re-assembles
the data that has been fractured during initial coding to give coherence to the
emerging analysis. In short, it involves looking for codes across all the
information that could be collapsed into higher-level nodes. Given my several
hundred nodes, I considered that taking a helicopter view of all of the data was
a sensible thing to do to get a sense of what the data was saying (Charmaz, 2006).

Without the use of NVivo 11 or even a computer, but by looking through
the twelve pages of the printed codes (Appendix A) placed on the floor, I
scrutinised all codes. To examine them for patterns, to see what were the most
common ‘topics' being talked about. With the use of coloured pens, common
categories were identified and so named. For example, there was a collection of
comments about age and gender, the ‘misfit's own (young) age is a problem
against those of his co-workers – they were middle-aged, where the misfit was
young. Then there was the case of there being either all men in or all women or of
different qualifications in the department, the person being a misfit because they
were the only one with a higher education qualification or the opposite sex. These
I grouped into a node labelled ‘misfit or fit connected to demographics’. In
another 2nd order node, ‘strong feelings over a sense of misfit' I placed comments
made by the misfits themselves and how they felt about their situation or how
they perceived other people must be thinking about them. The process continued
as I moved the 362 ‘nodes’ into nodes with titles that reflected the language used
by the discussants. These were:

A misfit can’t change, always the outsider, Americans (as an example
culture) see misfits as successful, carrying forward misfit experiences to the
present, certain personalities fit in better than yours, company restructure and
culture changes, depressed because of outcast feelings, depth of feeling, doesn’t want to socialise, fit in or be fired, HR no help at all, misfit lies solely with the person, not fitting in feels unsafe, persecution, victim, everyone hates me complex.

There was also, within the coding exercise the activity of ‘constant comparative methods' carried out. To establish analytical distinctions and therefore to make comparisons within the data to find similarities and differences, for example comparing one person's comments against another in respect of blogs to a published media article and coding accordingly, because no two-people had the same opinion about a news article or forum posting. Carrying that through to focused coding means that the categories are continually being compared with each other and to developing concepts for similarities and differences.

During the focused coding activity, I initially generated 14 core categories on the first sweep.

- HR or management ineffective
- Misfit or fit connected to the culture or socialisation issues
- Misfit or fit connected to demographics
- Misfits over time or trigger event
- Misfits seen in a positive light
- Outcomes of misfit feelings
- Outsider position – group influence
- Strong feelings over sense of misfit
- Wants to fit in or needs to fit to keep job
- Socialisation issues (merged with misfit connected to culture)
- Organisational changes as a trigger (blended with trigger events)
- Fit happens in many dimensions (mixed with socialisation issues)
- Misfit as negative (combined with strong feelings)

I then re-examined them for duplication of meaning and reduced them to 9 groups as shown in Table 5 Nine Coding Groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nine Coding Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Outcomes of misfit feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Misfits over time or trigger event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>HR or management ineffective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wants to fit in or needs to fit to keep job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Misfit or fit connected to demographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Misfits seen in a positive light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Strong feelings over sense of misfit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Outsider position - group influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the next chapter 4, the categories and the coded comments within them are presented for contextualisation and to support my progression through the selective categorisation level going towards the core conceptual themes that I took towards theory development.

3.22 Conclusion

The research paradigm which has influenced the way that I undertook my research was discussed, along with an argument for how well it sits alongside other approaches. As one of the most critical aspects of a methodology is to explain not only a researcher did what they did, and in a certain way, it follows
that there needs to be a reasoning for not adopting other paradigms. I have done this. Ethics has been a subject that needed particular attention and care for the new method of Netnography used, to data scrape narrative from open source web-based discussion fora. I have explicitly addressed and argued that approach at some length.

I have also presented a line of reasoning for the choice of a qualitative research approach that used a grounded theory methodology (GTM) to 'best' understand the characteristics of an organisational misfit. Within the GTM, the position and use of a literature review before and during the study is deliberated along with the stance of me as a researcher approaching the study as a tabula rasa. Leading on from the 'blank canvas' metaphor I gave considerable attention to the section on reflexivity and the influences of experience and subject knowledge that I brought into this particular study and that which guided the coding of the data.

In this chapter I presented my thesis’s research design and in the latter section I scoped out the central data collection method that I used. I had initially planned my data collection as mono-method through in-depth interviews. I later expanded the methods to methods, to incorporate Netnography for a multi-method approach because of difficulty in accessing a purposive sample. I also discuss whether the interviewee sample could be regarded as generalisable and available within the time span of this study, so I considered a multi-method approach that made use of narrative within web-based communities and blogs as appropriate, mainly because they already come with some form of context. At the same time, articles in the popular press, media, non-fictional and fictional books were referred to get a sense of 'misfit' in the context in which it was discussed by the leading and marginal actors.
Some ten years on new (digital) media as featuring in the 2014 setting of the 13th European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies (ECRM 2014) can and should be used as both a tool and a site of research. Moreover, these new approaches may provide new insight and greater relevancy for qualitative (& quant) researchers (Quinton, 2014).

Additionally, the snowballing (homophilic nature of websites to connect to other sites/information that has similar characteristics), facilitated the theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation stages of a grounded theory methodology because of the extensive reach of the internet and the ‘large' numbers of people using discussion fora. I looked at ‘communicative acts’ as arising from new media in order find out more about what it means to be an organisational misfit. This involved me going online to sites and fora where such people were likely to gather of their own accord such as discussion fora dedicated to, or springing up in response to the specific topics. For instance and following on from the example of Bogard, (2001) who drew upon the New York Times and the Washington Post for stories about homelessness, the subject of her study. I looked too at Media articles but around the idea of ‘the office misfit' both for what Bogard describes as authors' 'dominant and elite voices in the public conversation about what is perceived to be an [organisational] problem'. I also examined the readers’ opinions posted online in response to postings and which often linked to other relevant websites.

The increasing use of discussion fora as a way of expressing deep-felt emotions and thoughts anonymously, away from organisational censure presented rich and apparently unabridged information. Through examining online commentaries and unrestrained threads I was able to build upon the initial
knowledge I gathered through other means such as the in-depth interviews and (little) literature about an organisational misfit, and in a very much ‘in the moment’ way. This came about through identifying and following through the pop-up and often transient communities of expression that occurred around organisational misfit topics. Sometimes through media as aforementioned, moving to or originating in web facilitated media, on blogs and within lead influencers' postings. All of the sites used in this particular stage of data collection were in the public domain and did not require membership. As would have been the case with social networks (SNS) such as MySpace, Facebook, Cyworld, and Bebo which are “‘mechanisms’ for the audience to connect, communicate, and interact with each other and their mutual friends …”(Correa, Hinsley, & de Zúñiga, 2010:248). Participants' details and profiles were therefore not always available or in part, and these are itemised at appendix C. This could well be because people wish to retain a sense of anonymity as related to a struggle with issues of personal presentation on social media. Not wanting to display their unhappy feelings to friends, family and co-workers because that would be at odds with their public image, open up themselves to trolling, flaming and possibly damage their career (Jowett, 2015).

The bulk of my data came from people commenting on topics relating to organisational misfit on websites across UK, USA, and Australia where English was spoken. I captured threads of discussion and lines of thought for the relevance of the content. I then proceeded to analyse the data in accordance with a constructivist grounded theory methodology through initial (1st) and focused (2nd) levels to relate codes to one another and to create categories of common themes. This was done through offering an overarching schematic to show the
relationships between the grounded theory methodology used and theories adopted, as set alongside the relevant stages of NVivo 11 (used as a qualitative tool for textual analysis). This initial schematic provides the structure and rationale for discussing my approach and findings in a logical and structured manner (in both the methodology and findings chapters). Especially given that both of these sections have to provide the reader (who may not know NVivo 11) sufficient information to be able to follow the process as well understand a coherent narrative which explains the findings. These theoretically saturated categories at the focused level will next be subjected to detailed analysis of the content before proceeding to theory development. These steps are presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 4 - Data analysis

4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I analysed the data gathered following a constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) package called NVivo 11. I have detailed steps of the coding and categorising up to focus (2nd) level as well as 'memoing' certain thoughts and features. In this chapter, the categories and sub-categories which made up the focus level categories are further examined, synthesised and regrouped under more specific factors to provide a foundation for a conceptual model of misfit. I also analysed the groups and the coded comments within them for stimuli to feelings of misfit including any situational drivers to those feelings. My further interrogation of the data leads towards an understanding of what misfit feelings are, how they are constructed and expressed, how they are dealt with and why they matter.

The data were also considered in the light of the objectives of the study:

1. To examine whether there are certain factors that lead to someone’s sense of misfit
2. To investigate whether there are consequences of an individual’s sense of misfit
3. To examine how people cope and manage their sense of misfit within the work environment
4.2 Data structure

The first order categories, of which there are several hundred, were discussed in the last chapter. After the first level (focused) coding, I was left with 9 second-order themes *Table 6 Data structure - Second-Order Themes* in order of the number of references from low to high as initially connected to the data. They are also representative of what I have determined to be the order of size and organisational hard and soft costs involved. If for example themes 1 – 3 inclusive are noticed and addressed, the productive status quo may very well be maintained or improved. Attention given at this stage could perhaps ward off low level rumblings and dissatisfaction as well as the counterproductive work behaviours which may be developing. The next level of themes, 4 – 6 inclusive are becoming outwardly noticeable (more explicit in terms of GTM) as far as the individual is concerned because of the profound feelings around self-worth and social identity that are surfacing prompted by perceptions, real or not, of exclusion to the group.

This might be an indication that the organisation is not cognisant of the effects of its departments' relational demographics, job strains, developing perceptions and cultural influences. By the time the last three categories are reached 7 – 9 inclusive there are problems in play which may well have severe consequences for organisational profitability because of the negative feelings of employees. The causes of these issues are deep-rooted – aspects of the corporate culture, ostracising group power against one or two individuals and negative departmental interactions being such examples.
Table 6 Data structure - Second-Order Themes

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Outcomes of misfit feelings (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(unhappiness, depression, boredom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Misfits over time or trigger event (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(changing attitudes/satisfaction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>HR or management ineffective (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(autonomy and conflict)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Misfit or fit connected to demographics (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(identity, values)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Wants to fit in or needs to fit to keep job (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(survive and develop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Misfits seen in a positive light (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(hopeful)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Strong feelings over sense of misfit (59) (powerful)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Outsider position - group influence (190) (homogeneity &amp; need to prove self)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues (315)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exclusionary, ostracising power of the collective, damage to self-image/social identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data representing these second-order themes at the focus coding stage are now presented using the language, sentence construction and spellings of the fora respondents or interviewees Table 7 examples of narratives from the 9 categories which go towards building a picture and understanding of an individual’s construct of organisational misfit and the resultant outcomes after cognitive processing.
4.3 The consequences of an individual’s sense of misfit

The references under this heading will go towards answering research question 2: What are the consequences to self and perhaps others of feeling like a misfit.

_Table 7 examples of narratives from the 9 categories_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nine subcategories as shown in report Appendix B page 8, examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling like an outcast at work? I am just so depressed, if anyone wants to talk while there at work, pm me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a hard time staying motivated and engaged throughout my shift so I resort to things that make me happy, making really obnoxious jokes - puns, word play, random odd associations of things I make in my head, fidgeting with things at the desk because I am not happy with my surroundings, and other time passers until we get busy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The isolation and devastation of feeling like you are the only one who doesn't belong or fit in can overshadow all else in one's life. It can become a repetitive self-fulfilling process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change everything. You be the bubbly, sweet person who everyone comes to. Ask the simple girl if she wants to grab lunch. Ask the depressed dude what's the matter and why they look so down. Tell the superior chick to stop trying to stomp all over you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt ostracised and almost became ill over the way I was treated......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My frustration manifested itself in the form of open boredom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

161
You can be a misfit by simply listening to — and judiciously acting on — your urge to question the (often maddeningly brain-dead) why, who, what, where, when, how of any and every organization, plan, initiative, or idea.

4.3.1 Summary of outcomes of misfit feelings

The quotes above show that people feel depressed, bored and unhappy as a result of misfitting and resort to questioning and game playing to try and alleviate these symptoms. Moreover, the feeling one misfits with the situation; job or collection of people in these narratives could well be the rumblings of greater trouble to come in the form of low-level counterproductive work behaviour (CWB), and/or internalising negative feelings. Again, formatting could be clearer here in terms of how one section leads into another.

4.4 Misfit over time or trigger event

There are 16 references under this category Table 8 Misfit over time or trigger event which is about people moving into an uncomfortable state of misfit from explicit/overt trigger events.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misfit over time or trigger event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five subcategories as shown in report Appendix B page 8, examples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The areas I work quite a lot on are that of "compromise agreements", and thus sometimes it’s because that something has gone particularly wrong. Sometimes it’s because it just isn’t working out anymore.

You can also become a misfit when you no longer mesh with what you were doing. I think people change over time and need to be able to move into other things.

There has been only one time in my life when I have felt like a misfit, and it wasn’t good. I left the firm. There was a particular event with a particular person that triggered this feeling for me to the extent that other people noticed that there was something going on.

Many of us have our own values and ideals. However, if you find yourself questioning the values and ideals of those around you at work, it could be an indication that you are out of place. Your boss might not be doing anything wrong, but the priorities and actions of the organization might not jive with what’s most important to you.

The department is very close (they often each lunch and socialize together)

For years I felt it was something I was doing wrong - that it was my error somehow or there was something wrong with me - because I never felt part of the crowd or really "there" for anything...from family dinners to roommates just hanging out in college. Now I can feel more or less accepted and when I don’t I just move on... just as I don’t
Only one respondent mentioned a 'trigger' event bringing about a sense of misfit. In the other instances, a feeling of misfit appears to come from a realisation that actions, events, values or the crowd have changed, away from an individual's expectations suggesting that it is a subtler process and concerning interactions that have yet to be examined.

4.5 HR or management ineffective

The data presented here, Table 9 HR or management ineffective is a mixture of perspectives from human resource (HR) managers, business consultants and employees. The theme extracted from the sixteen statements, some examples of which I show here, is that as long as the job gets done in the way that a manager says that it must be done while accommodating for their (the manager's) changing requirements, then that is all that matters. Problems with people are of small concern, or at least involve concerns that are not dealt with. For example, as demonstrated in this category, counterproductive workplace behaviour (CWB) such as anti-social/aggressive behaviour, purposely doing work incorrectly, absence or withdrawal (e.g. absence, lateness and turnover). All action or inaction likely to negatively affect the organisation and their stakeholders (e.g. clients, co-workers, customers and supervisors) is not addressed or examined. To do so would mean understanding that, as the literature highlights, (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Robinson & Bennett, 1995) CWB is taken to be a form of retaliation or as a way of coping with job stressors. It is an expression of negative emotions such as anger, hostility, anxiety and unhappiness on the part of the employee and
is overlooked or not addressed, but only if the required work and its output is maintained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9 HR or management ineffective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HR or management ineffective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 subcategories as shown in report Appendix B page 3 – examples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The biggest mistake managers make is to wait to bring up problems. It gives both people a false sense of optimism that everything will be alright when it isn’t now and may never be. Nip problems in the bud, as they say, and you’ll be way ahead of the game when the person does step up to the plate OR they continue to spiral downhill making their exit a foregone conclusion. Why the different colour highlighting here? This is not obvious.

The second biggest mistake we see is managers waffling about what to do. They announce one thing ("You have to meet the next deadline or we’ll need to meet with HR.") and then do something else ("I appreciate that there was some difficulty in your family this past month, perhaps you can get everything on track now.") leaving the managee to believe they have many more options and/or chances going forward and therefore making the task of letting them go more prolonged and more painful—for both of you.

Occasionally you will see these problems continue year after year. They are saying you are not performing last year, and you’re not doing anything about it. And that is indicative of a relationship which really isn’t really working anymore.

There will always be people who don’t necessarily fit in with an organizational culture. Obviously, they had/have the quals to be hired, so the best thing a leader can do is find a place where this individual can fit and help him get hired there. In the long run, it
will benefit both the leader and his organization as there will be reciprocity and goodwill.

What’s the problem? Why is it so hard to pull the plug on these folks early on?”

I'm sure we all have stories about atrocities at work. But, I also am feeling anger. Anger at the corporate mentality. These things I heard and learned.

- If you don't feel like you're being treated fairly at your job, there's the door

And up to now, he has been crafting the job to suit himself. People do. They find themselves falling out of fit out of certain things, they will hunker down and craft everything to suit themselves and hope everyone ignores them and let them get on with they want to do.

Most people would prefer to never hurt anyone’s feelings or upset the status quo. And business managers and supervisors are no different. So rather than bring up the evidence that someone is having a difficult time, or is acting out their dissatisfaction by coming late to meetings, refusing to be present in team meetings by monkeying around in their iPhone, or routinely turning in their work after the deadline you wait, you put off the "big talk for small boys/girls."

It's a fact of life that I deal with. Most employers only care that you do a good job.

The category label reflects its content through the sub-categories which shows what people regard as important or having an effect either upon themselves as a 'misfit', or for other people so labelled within an organisation. It might, therefore, be a contributory factor for research question 1. what are the reasons
behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit to unpick the reasons for the aforementioned counterproductive/workplace deviant behaviour and the reasons for the negative emotions that underpin them. On the part of the employee, that introspection is subsumed by the overall need not to appear to be a misfit for fear of losing one’s job. From the organisational perspective as presented here the job requirements, image and deliverables are all that matter.

4.6 Misfit or fit connected to demographics

There were 29 references in the data *Table 10 Misfit or fit connected to demographics* to demographics such as age, race, sex, level of education. These, except age, already form part of the person P side of a PO fit equation within research in this field. Religion was never mentioned. I expected to find more references to demographics that were presented in the postings. Where commentary is made, it has the tone of expressing the misfit in the context of being the only one of their demographic segment, of being in the minority. Indeed, the person was a misfit (noun) but they might not necessarily experience a negative feeling of misfit, just a level of frustration in being that minority person of whatever variable. They had few if any people to relate to during the workday.

*Table 10 Misfit or fit connected to demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misfit or fit connected to demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 subcategories as shown in report Appendix B page 7, examples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

………..*But let me be blatantly honest about the main reason why my co-workers and I don’t communicate as much as they do with each other.*
I am a black female. They are, for the most part, a bunch of white guys. What are we going to talk about?

I realize that a lot of people out there like to act as if they believe people are people and we’re all the same. But I have predominantly grown up in white environments and…no, no, not really the same. Sorry. There are, for lack of a more accurate word, cultural differences between whites and blacks… especially depending on the race/sex mix of the people involved. I think the guys are great as human beings, and I am grateful that they have been so helpful to me so far and friendly. But–and they have said this about themselves directly to me—they…are…DORKS. And I do not know how to say this without being offensive, but…most white guys I’ve encountered just are. Ultimately, it’s a matter of different strokes, different folks.

Most white guys just like things most black women don’t, most white guys just like to discuss things most black women don’t, and most white guys think things are funny that most black women don’t. There will definitely be some things in common—I can speak with some of the guys there about football until the cows come home—but there will likely be even more things that aren’t in common between most white men and most black women. Sorry if you don’t agree or understand how this can be.

The funny thing is I think the guys with whom I work get this on some level—particularly as far as my being a woman and their being men. Because even white men and white women differ in terms of what’s funny and types of discussions and such, which is probably why the white female tech geek in my area hardly speaks, too. My boss maybe doesn’t get it, and she’s a white female. But the guys and I
have an understanding, basically, that when they start talking about dumb stuff I will just ignore them and tune them out. I told them that I do this. They think that’s a great idea. They talk about dumb stuff, in my opinion, 90% of the time. That means 90% of the time, we’re not going to communicate with each other. I’m new—I’m not going to come in and demand that people who have been working there act differently, especially when I’m pretty fine with everything anyway. But I’m not going to pretend they are interesting or funny to me, either.

I’m currently working in a council doing administration work as a trainee, for nearly 2 months now. However, I don’t fit in with the people I work with at ALL! And here is why.. I’m the youngest guy in the office (20 years old) and everyone else is all female and ages between 30-50.. And there is absolutely nothing to talk about, that isn't job related. And me being a shy guy doesn’t always work out as well.

Whenever I get to work, I feel very lonely and eat lunch by myself. I envy my other friends, when they talk about their work... It just sounds so fun to me.

Fortunately, co-workers are very nice people.

Ha! i feel you bro. as a guy working in an all girl office too i can tell you they drive me mental. they just go on and on and on, meetings are a waste of time as they just talk and talk and talk and im like inside shut the flap up! i don't care! they gossip and bitch everytime they get and always want to get a reaction out of you. so to counter that i be loud too. being the only guy you need to stand your own ground either you get ganged upon especially when they pass the buck and get you to do the most ridiculous tasks because they are either lazy or don't want to do it and code it as "teaching".
From a large sample size of middle aged females I have continuously seen gossip, character assassination, jealousy and a tendency to transfer anger a husband/family situation onto colleagues. But perhaps the most annoying is the pervasive and borderline obscene pregnancy talk and the anything goes attitude towards it. Otherwise serious high level female managers are suddenly loudly talking about what happened to their genitals during birth. I'm not prudish about medical needs, but a male couldn't get away with talking about their circumcision status etc.

I have the opposite, mostly males where I work. I guess because I am older, I have a partner, I am just "one of the guys". It took time, conversations ended abruptly when I walked up etc. However, after I broke the ice by telling a rude joke, and they learnt I give as good as I get, they are pretty good guys.

One of the guys said, they like having me around, unlike the other females that have come and gone, he said gee if we told a dirty joke or teased them like we do you, they would have gone running screaming sexual harassment. For me, it is adjusting to the environment, though if one of them grabbed me in an inappropriate place, I would first of all break his hand, then make a complaint. I made a point of saying this, tell your dirty jokes, your dirty stories, give me shit and I will give it back, but grab my arse or anywhere else and I will do you like a dogs dinner. They appreciated the honesty and it helped.

Working in an office with women can be a nightmare! What you said is true – watch out for bullies and being taken advantage of! I was a trainee admin 10 years ago. I finished
my traineeship and got out of there. Don't take it to heart though – most of them are nice if a little crazy at times

Talking to them is easy.

Find something they like to bitch about. Bring it up and they will harp on about it for 20 mins. Do that a few times and they will like you.

Also if there is any bitching about something at work just listen and don't say much about it and once again they will like it I'm sure. Boring I know but doing it will bring you into the group kinda thing. Then they might talk to you.

Play sort of sweet and nice role. Women in there 40's and 50's love that.

Ah brings back some memories. Mate I was there when I was 20 in the QLD Government getting my CERT 3 in Business Admin.

Being shy won't help mate you need to go in there and talk shit with the rest of them. I had a good time it teaches you how to talk to women which helps you out in later life ;). TLDR get over shyness get in there and talk with them.

There is nothing definite about whether being white, black, male or female, young or old is the reason for feeling like a misfit beyond whether that attribute is in the minority. Such as the poor young man of twenty stuck in an office 90% dominated by ‘very old ladies, somewhere around 50-60’, to which he misfitted. People want to be recognised for what they are, not as part of a homogenous majority, which is indicative of a more profound psychological level construct around value and self-esteem.
4.7 Wants to fit in or needs to fit to keep job

The theme coming from the comments posted under this category is that doing a good job, in isolation of fitting in with the work environment (E) is insufficient for the organisation’s view on productivity and synergy. There were 35 references to this within the data (see Table 11 Wants to fit in or needs to fit to keep job). For the individuals, the act of not being able to fit in is upsetting and is understood to have a negative impact on continuing employment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wants to fit in or needs to fit to keep job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>14 subcategories as shown in report Appendix B page 7, examples</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Right now, I'm just trying to learn how to apply my college education, get along with people, and grow into a position where I can become the biggest and brightest.**

**Even though I have resolved to correct the mistakes that I did make in the past positions, I am still quite terrified that this will be another environment I will not fit into.**

**Why am I such a misfit? I am not just a nitwit Help! He polled his team, and then came back to tell me that he did not have a position to offer me now, but would be able to extend my contract for 3-6 months to see if the situation improved. He said that he felt the current team dynamic was good, and for whatever reason, I didn't seem to be fitting in with them. He said he was 100% satisfied with my technical ability, and felt I had handled all of my assignments skillfully and quickly. I said I had noticed this slight distance myself, and asked what I might do to improve our cohesiveness. I'm not shy, but I'm not extroverted - I like to come in and do my job, and sometimes stand around and chat next to the water cooler.**

**You're not the only in this situation. Actually I'm a driver for a major office supply company and I don't talk much either at my job but everyone has gotten use to it, so it's no big deal now. Definetly listen into the topics that they're talking about and if you know something about it, make a comment or an opinion about it or even if you no experience it in your life.**
I used to have huge issues with how some employers focus on “fit” or “cultural fit” in the hiring process. And last year, I learned the hard way that how you “fit” plays a role in how you’re treated at work, not only by fellow co-workers but also by managers. Work environments seem to have shifted from focusing on how well someone can do his/her job to how likable they are.

can really relate to this post as I have started a new job also....although in my case there are LOTS AND LOTS of people which is just as bad as not hardly any if you ask me....so many names and faces, rather overwhelming....I know I am already known as a superquiet person but I need this job really, really bad and I need the on the job experience that if offers....so quitting is just not an option for at least 6 to 8 months, a year would be even better....I can already tell it would take forever for me to fit in but I am just going to concentrate on learning all I can about my new trade and doing a kick *** job. Do not censor quotes – I have seen plenty of academic work of this kind with much stronger swearing than this – it is not a problem!

To keep a job you need to fit into the work culture - one Of The Most Persistent Mistakes People Make Is... not understanding the importance of fitting in in their work environments. Indeed, fitting in is something that enables you to both get and keep a job. In terms of what it takes to succeed in the long term, fitting in may actually be more important than your skill level.

The comments made were not just about the job to be done or the ability to do a job; it is about the pressing need to fit in with others within the organisation and to be seen to be doing so. Relational demographics are not mentioned as a
barrier to this process. The discussants seem to realise that it is essential to fit in but struggle to identify what that means in practice.

4.8 Misfit seen in a positive light

Where people identify themselves as misfit they seek to reframe the state under a positive light, about being different, being problem solvers, more successful, taking control and not being part of the status quo. In the data Table 12 Misfit seen in a positive light, 55 references are made and examples are given of celebrity people being misfits, such as Steve Jobs (Apple), Bill Gates (Microsoft) and Lady Gaga (artist) thus why they are so great.

Table 12 Misfit seen in a positive light

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misfit seen in a positive light</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>31 subcategories as shown in report Appendix B page 8,</strong> examples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| It certainly goes to affirm my growing position that I’m going to enjoy my life even if it means doing it alone. And I resolve to be more successful, to have a richer life than ANY of them ever will. I intend to take back and keep control. |

| Here’s a confession that may surprise no one who regularly reads this blog: I’m a misfit. And I always have been. And having spent a few decades on this planet as a slightly octagonal peg facing an endless vista of square, machine-made holes, I’ve developed a hypothesis about achievement. |

| It’s this: great accomplishment usually takes the impertinence not to fit into the suffocating status quo. Consider the following. Steve Jobs is a misfit — an unashamedly unbuttoned creative in a role usually reserved for the most robotically droidly of bean counters. Larry and Sergey are misfits. Shigeru Miyamoto, Gordon Ramsay, Jay- |
Z, JK Rowling, Indra Nooyi, Arianna Huffington? All slightly off-center outsiders — all challengers of the status quo, who’ve never quite fit neatly into its drab, bureaucratically predefined, dumbed-down boxes. Whomever you’d like to add to the list above, of this much I’m virtually certain: they’ll probably be a misfit.

It’s not that every misfit accomplishes something fundamentally unexpectedly awesome (for example, yours truly). A

I gave a TEDx talk in Taipei a while ago about why the world needs more misfits, and so your article definitely strikes a chord. So many of the problems we have today are "misfit problems"—they don’t fit neatly into a single area of expertise. The environment probably being the biggest one. So we need misfit people who can look at problems from multiple angles, who aren’t stuck in one area of knowledge, and who can be creative in how they find solutions.

Interesting quote, but wouldn’t it be pretty easy to identify this person from this information by searching online for the talk?

fast chasing 70yo, I fell off my "peer perch" along time ago. Too many contemporaries are retiring and dying too soon. There’s too much left to do in this world...though full of chaos...differences still are needing to be made...and others are encouraged to join those who will work well at making a difference. Today I’ve been alive for 25,268 days (this thanks to an app a mentoree has put on my iPhone)...and...God willing, I hope to live to at least 95...9,431 days to go. So the deep joy of being a misfit is getting better all the time. Your articles I share often with those I’m mentoring globally.

Again...thank you...as in very much!!!
If you are a misfit in most things, life will be hard. If you are a misfit because you chose the wrong thing to be doing in your life, a radical change could be beneficial.

You can also become a misfit when you no longer mesh with what you were doing. I think people change over time and need to be able to move into other things.

Does misfit have to change or convince anyone of his/her merits/point of view? Not really. His very misfitness is what sets him and few like him apart, giving them their 20% niche which delivers the 80%.

Misfit as a desired trendy label - This can be good for some people. It can mean that they are unique, special. And some people don't want to fit in

Famous people named in this category are the ‘good guys and gals’ who by their misfit personalities have built a creative organisation around them or could do so in unrestrained environments. They are the only people as misfits capable of bringing about change or something different (Meindl, 1995). The discussants seem to make sense of their own misfit by posing that it is a virtue and should be valued. Misfits also want to love themselves, which is somewhat at odds with the following category label.

4.9 Strong feelings over sense of misfit

In contrast to misfit being seen as positive, there were 59 references to feelings resulting from misfit at work Table 13 Strong feelings over sense of misfit. The category here demonstrates the depth of feeling from people who perceive themselves as a misfit as they ask for support from others on internet fora. The tones of the requests suggest that the people posing the queries are not
so sure of themselves and are suffering psychologically as a result of their perceived misfit and difference, because their sense of misfit generates negative emotions such as ostracism, isolation, anxiety and feelings of rejection.

Table 13 Strong feelings over sense of misfit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong feelings over sense of misfit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five subcategories as shown in report Appendix B page 8, examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“.........The isolation and devastation of feeling like you are the only one who doesn't belong or fit in can overshadow all else in one's life.......”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If you do not find an organization where you fit in, you are likely in for a rough ride”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Misfit has negative connotations of being awkward and a social outcast”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The isolation and devastation of feeling like you are the only one who doesn't belong or fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The new guy number 2 expressed his dislike of me by physically avoiding me, keeping me out of meetings, and keeping me out of everything. I was side-lined”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don't try to be too obnoxious but I don't have much in common with anybody I work with. I wish I could just stand for my entire 8 hour shift and not say anything or move anything or do anything, but even for an introvert that is torture”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“That said, I don’t feel like I fit in with my department. When I first started, I was very eager to fit in, work hard and succeed within the organization. Most of the people in the company seemed normal and nice as I met them, but I...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
noticed that the people in my department seemed.....odd. Some of them didn’t make eye contact or return greetings, others had loud, overly casual ways of speaking and acting (bodily function jokes, casual swearing). As I worked more within my department and ate lunch with these folks, I noticed more behaviors that I didn’t know how to respond to.

These are comments from people who are experiencing misfit and feel in a state of isolation and are ostracised, outcast from the workgroups and their events. They are looking for support, affiliation, a sense of belonging (Hamburger & Ben-Artzi, 2000), but it seems that in their mind they are not getting it. Not to be part of a group is emotionally painful and to be purposefully ostracised, even more so.

4.10 Outsider position – group influence

There were 190 references Table 14 Outsider position – group influences in the data to individuals feeling outside of a group of people, ostracised, unable to join or fit in, despite willingness, or need to do so. The power of the group collective is demonstrated as well as the resulting feelings created by the excluded person.

Table 14 Outsider position – group influences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outsider position – group influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33 subcategories as shown in report Appendix B page 9, examples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I just completed a solid month of work at a production house, for whom I've done work since May of 2009. Hardly a month has gone by where I haven't been in their office for one thing or another. So I wrapped up work on a project for
them the other day, and then today on the Facebook of one of the regular employees of the company, he mentions how he’s excited for their office Christmas party, which will be followed by a casino night. Of course, I’m not invited. They were talking about this party in the office, but never mentioned it to me. Am I supposed to ask to be invited? Yeesh.

It’s been the story of my life...always the outsider. I get to think I’ll never make any headway....because there is something fundamentally, unalterably flawed in me that NTs can sense, that they don’t like, that I can never change, no matter how nice I am, how engaging I try to be, how many boxes of donuts I bring in the morning.

I’ve gone from working in an environment that is really sociable and bubbly to a really mundane, small office where the entire workforce are really clicky people who don’t seem to like change and view newbies as outsiders, irrelevant.

The isolation and devastation of feeling like you are the only one who doesn’t belong or fit in can overshadow all else in one’s life. It can become a repetitive self-fulfilling process -- a pervasive experience of wanting to be on the inside, but standing alone watching others have fun whom we might believe have selectively and intentionally left us out.

I remember feeling trapped in this position in high school. The “in crowd” seemed to really be having a fabulous time. I watched from the periphery wondering what was wrong with me that I didn’t authentically want to be doing what they were doing and why didn’t it matter to them whether I was part of the group or not. I wanted the fun they were having, but I knew that I would have to fake it to be a
part of the group and I wasn’t good at that. I wanted them to want me. I knew that forcing or inserting myself into their activities wouldn’t accomplish that. Feelings of not fitting in, not being chosen and just not belonging anywhere dominated my experiences in high school.

Whenever I get to work, I feel very lonely and eat lunch by myself. I envy my other friends, when they talk about their work... It just sounds so fun to me.

As life marched on, I noticed myself experiencing the outsider phenomenon repeatedly.

My problem is the 30-45 minutes I spend at the end of the day loading the truck for the next day and filling out some paperwork. They have this table in the warehouse where 5-6 people always seem to be blabbing away. This is a small company and most of the people have worked here 4 or 5 years at least and it feels like I’m the only one who isn’t Mr. or Mrs. Talkative

Whoa, you are OVERREACTING. Just chill and do what you’re doing. Do your job well and you’ll have no problem. The socializing will come in time.

I agree with Lady Bugg. There are heaps of girls at my work who stick together, there’s like 5 of them in a group. They go out together, have lunch together and gossip together. I talk to them, but to be honest it’s better to be out of the group, especially in a workplace.

I have been working at a software company for a little over a year now. I like the company, we produce a product which I like, the mission statement is very focused on making a difference in education, and the culture of the overall company is very relaxed and employee centered (jeans and
free lunch!). In addition to this, we continue to profit and grow despite the awful economy. The pay is decent and I see opportunities for advancement. That said, I don’t feel like I fit in with my department.

“I’m always the kid, my nose pressed against the window, looking at everyone inside having a good time.” “I didn’t belong in my family, so why should I feel like I belong anywhere else.” “I may be included but I never really feel like I belong.”

Eh it’s too late. Party was today. f**k em all to hell anyways. Done trying to be their friends. From now on ill be using them just like they used me, so I can achieve my goals. They sold themselves out long ago for $ and having kids and all the stuff sheeple do. I’ve got bigger, better things in store, and I’m done letting all these mediocre mouthbreathers get to me. They can have their f***ing pathetic party, I’m going to have to world. See comment above about swearing.

Outcast at work - No one talks to me even when i try to mix in

Feel like an outsider at work – I don’t belong. That’s where a lot of people go wrong. They end up wanting to gain approval from others and end up losing themselves in the process.

if you think there is a problem with bullying in our schools, well, look no further then the workplace. the kids are just mirroring behavior that they have seen their parents exhibit. mean kids have mean parents, and they grow up to have mean kids themselves. i hate work for these very reasons. it’s never the job that you have that is difficult, it’s the people who make it difficult. and of course, if you are the victim of being bullied at work, you will never win. you are
seen as the problem, and it’s your faults that you were bullied. so what is the solution? how much productivity is lost in the workplace because people waste time ganging up on other employees, or spreading gossip?

I asked M if she wanted to grab a drink last night after work, but she told me she was spending time with her bf....then A was leaving today and M asked her if she wanted to grab a drink this evening. I AM SICK OF IT!!! I put myself out there, and try to be sociable, and get shot down all the time. I happen to think I'm fun to hang out with, and I'll never understand this. I just want a happy, easy social life where I don't feel like I'm "begging" people to hang out with me or guilting them into it...or something....

My workplace functions on an ‘in-crowd’ system – just like high school. If you go drinking with the boss and the cool kids, then you pretty much have free rein.

Some people are simply so different that they are outsiders and always will be. These are not the people who dress funny to attract attention to themselves and identify as outsiders; they usually have a clique that supports them. Rather, these people have characteristics which simply make them different in ways other people cannot understand or relate to.

In situations like that, I would never force myself to go over and chitchat with them, but at the same time, I’d be paranoid they’d start with the snide remarks out loud. They could talk all they want behind my back, but if they start saying "he's too quiet" or "he's weird, he never talks", I’d be devastated. I know it's irrational thinking, but that's how I've always reacted.
I would take it slow at first, and maybe try and eventually become friends with at least 1 other co-worker. If you're friends with 1 person, you could go over to that person and talk for 2 minutes, and you'll feel better that you have 1 friend.

I've been working in an office since July, don't have any friends yet, but there's no one who I could ever click with.

I'm currently working in a council doing administration work as a trainee, for nearly 2 months now. However, I don't fit in with the people I work with at ALL.

Am being treated like an outcast at work - I am bieng set up by supervisors and employess and then laughed at behind my back. Not told information about work scheedule changes, and intimidation tactics. I have gone to supervisors and managment but I get the excuse they know of nothing wrong or out of context.

When it comes to keeping your job, is it more important that you join in and play the games (the nasty types, not the normal politics) than it is to do a good job? One boss told me I was doing great, then a month later laid me off and said "I told you you had to get along with them".

Have felt like an outsider, frozen out by the others and even persecuted to the point of wanting to leave.

Feeling like an outcast at work? Do u ever feel like this? I feel like this day in day out, and when I try to talk to them casually or at company events, I feel like an outsider. Most of them are close to my age (mid 20's to early 30's), but many of them talk about pretty boring stuff or are of the unprofessional type described previously.
Corporate Misfit ready to give up and be a cashier - I felt ostracized and finally just quit after only a year.

I don’t feel pathetic--until other people make me feel that way. My roommates make me feel pathetic, my coworkers make me feel pathetic. I have supportive, awesome friends and a wonderful boyfriend, but the majority of my time is spent with people who make me feel somehow stupid and unworthy.

Just wanted to vent. Does anyone else ever feel this way, or am I just....well, pathetic?

One theme that I have noticed with many of my counseling and coaching clients is the feeling they have of being on the outside looking in. This might be how they feel in a particular social situation such as with their family, at work or with a particular group of friends. For some, it is what they repeatedly experience.

Situation: When others joke together or just talk and don't include me for a while, I feel outside............ Man is a social animal, and when I'm put in a situation like this, I feel like an observer of the others rather than a part of it

This speaks the truth about me at work. I hate being shy cuz even when I do make an effort to talk, they never really talk to me, i have to do the small talk. And I never get asked out for lunch or anything. No matter what job I have, I'm always have to be the shy one, seems like I'm the only one that's shy everywhere I go. I am so nice and I have such a huge heart and I would do anything for anyone, but yet no one wants to talk to me or give me a chance.

I am just so depressed, if anyone wants to talk while there at work, pm me.
Your fear that you're being deliberately excluded inhibits you from participating. You can't expect people to meet you more than halfway every time, to have the patience or interest to draw you out -- in a group of adults, it's pretty much expected that each is responsible for holding their own. And there is a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy to it, because the less you attempt to inject yourself into a conversation, the less people will think you care about being involved. They're not snubbing you because they don't like you, they're overlooking you because you don't seem to be engaged.

Maybe you're just not wired to socialize that formally with the people you work with.

Oh I can relate about being left out of lunch, I've lost time the amount of times i've gone into the canteen to get my lunch to discover everyone else has went out for lunch without inviting me.

Fortunately everyone at my job is really nice & accepting. But I do know exactly what you mean. If you are yourself & atleast make an attempt to start a conversation with them, then it may not have anything to do with you. Maybe they are just immature adults who haven't grown up yet.

Being on the outside of a group, either felt or real, to feel rejected is a psychologically painful experience. People's desire to be part of a team seems to resonate with their sense of positive self-evaluation – the satisfaction of the need to be within ‘the group to feel validated. That which coheres with Tajfel's self-identity theory where part of a person's self-concept is derived from their knowledge of their membership of a social group. This goes together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1974,
These are important feelings because, as already mentioned in chapter 1, “....” A lack of belongingness could constitute severe deprivation and cause a variety of ill effects. Furthermore, a great deal of human behaviour, emotion, and thought is caused by this fundamental interpersonal motive”..... (Higgins & Kruglanski, 2000:25). To ‘fit’ is a basic human need and drive to conform (Henrich & Boyd, 1998). These aspects will be explored further in the next chapter, together with the following theme which is about the powerful negative effect upon people’s emotions because of feeling like a misfit, the influence coming from the culture of the group which is different to an individual’s expectations or image of the whole organisation.

4.11 Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues

The comments allocated under this heading represent the largest and therefore most important category (see Table 15 Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues). Three hundred and fifteen references were made within this group. These showed a diverse range of opinion, not only the importance of the immediate organisational culture as demonstrated by that of the ‘office’ or ‘department’ ‘but on the emphasis on fitting in or being accepted by that culture. The culture was not really defined by anyone but talked about as an environment that everyone knows what it is: made up of the characters, personality, influence and behaviours of immediate co-workers and managers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80+ sub-categories as shown in report Appendix B page 3 – 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inclusive, examples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I used to have huge issues with how some employers focus on “fit” or “cultural fit” in the hiring process. And last year, I learned the hard way that how you “fit” plays a role in how you’re treated at work, not only by fellow co-workers but also by managers. Work environments seem to have shifted from focusing on how well someone can do his/her job to how likeable they are. While I still have a problem with this, there is also more acceptance that this is how it is. That doesn’t mean I play that game, because I don’t really know how to play that game. One of the reasons why I attended law school and then ended up not practicing law is because I realized I’d have to spend my entire legal career pretending to be someone I’m not just to 1) get a job in the first place, 2) be treated fairly at my job and 3) keep my job. I don’t really know how to do that and don’t want to.

got a dose of culture shock

She’d gotten two job offers, one from Morgan Stanley and the other at a Japanese insurance company where the atmosphere was formal and buttoned down. If she took the insurance job, she says, “I realized that sooner or later I’d say the wrong thing.” She went with Morgan Stanley.

I probably would have been fine 20+ years ago. I am the type of employee who comes to work early, works hard, tries my best to be the best, doesn’t like down time (detest it, actually), will accept extra work and will do very little complaining to higher-ups. I don’t spend time talking or
dilly-dallying, and I won’t treat or talk to supervisors and managers as if we’re on the same level or try to be friends with them (except one time when it was invited). At work, I am focused on two things—doing my job and doing it well. I am very serious and very no-nonsense. Because of this, my ideal work environment is a very formal work environment.

I am finding that formal work environments are disappearing, though, especially in careers that aren’t super professional. I have worked one post-graduate job where my personality type was valued, and that place was run by non-Americans. I think Americans now believe that having less formal work environments is more employee-friendly, and that’s probably true for most Americans. But I also think it places an undue amount of importance on cultural fit, sometimes to the point of sacrificing having employees who are either really good or really want to be good vs having ones that just...well, fit in.

Career professionals agree that the culture of your office can mean as much for your happiness as your workload and your duties. Are you an extrovert who likes to chat and visit and socialize after hours? Perhaps you should think twice about the job offer from that white-shoe law firm where no one speaks above a whisper and the doors stay closed.

He said that what mattered was that I not do anything to encourage the new foreign management “invasion.”

Ask the right questions. Simply asking about work-life balance policies isn’t likely to get you useful information; your interviewer may give lip service to the virtues of a 40-hour work week when in fact no one leaves work until well past 8 p.m.
depending upon the organization you join. Fitting in will mean something different if you want to work for the government or military from what it will mean if you want to work for a private company or a public interest organization. Fitting in simply means that you will be comfortable around your co-workers and they will be comfortable with you.

For some people the wrong office culture can prove truly onerous or even cost them the job. Anita Attridge, a career coach in New York, had a client who worked as a vice president for a large pharmaceutical company based in Europe. The woman had to travel overseas once a month for three or four exhausting days at a stretch. Tired and jetlagged, she at first routinely turned down dinner and drinks invitations from her European colleagues, preferring to head back to her hotel and crash. Then she got some bad news: She wasn’t perceived as a strong leader and wasn’t doing her part as a member of the team. “She was startled,” Attridge says. “She had no idea she wasn’t doing well.” It turned out she was expected not only to give her all in the office but also to demonstrate her commitment to her company by socializing with her superiors and colleagues after hours.

“It wasn’t in her comfort zone to do that,” Attridge says. But Attridge advised her to come to terms with the need to socialize: “I said to her that going out to dinners was as much a part of the job as going to meetings. It’s a job requirement that isn’t listed.” Attridge also pointed out that a lot of informal but essential information changes hands at office social functions.

Attridge learned about the importance of office culture firsthand at one of her own first jobs 25 years ago. She was
working on the sales staff at Xerox in Rochester, N.Y. She labored hard all day, and she eschewed any form of office socializing—until her manager sat her down and asked if she wanted to have a career at the company. “He said, ‘If you don’t start changing what you’re doing, you’re never going to move ahead.’ He was very explicit.” Attridge started going to lunches and attending going-away parties.

Attridge and other career professionals agree that job seekers should realize that office culture can be as important as workload and duties. “It’s very important to look at the culture before you start the job.

Sometimes an office’s culture can be so dysfunctional you can find it impossible to do your job.

Not all misfits are bad news. Bad companies often spit out good people because they are not in harmony with the sour discordance of the norm. A rowing eight will go forward if all rowers are using the same inefficient style. If one should start to row efficiently, the boat will sink.

Misfits are often the good guys and they are often victimised by the US habit of blaming loners or misfits for all their problems. Before victimising misfits, perhaps you should check if they are what everyone should aspire to be rather than those to be fired in a fit of self righteous, self defeating, frequently misguided malice.

The company’s chief executive, terrified that competitors would steal his ideas, fostered an office culture corroded by fear, distrust and secrecy. Lassiter’s client, who was outgoing and enthusiastic, felt so stymied that he quit after a year to start his own energy financing venture. Says Lassiter, “If the CEO isn’t going to change anytime soon and
your values or ways of working are different, then you should be developing an exit plan.”

I have just started a new job and I have been there for three months. I was forced to apply for this job due to redundancy and I’ve gone from working in an environment that is really sociable and bubbly to a really mundane, small office where the entire workforce are really clicky people who don’t seem to like change and view newbies as outsiders, irrelevant.

When in Rome, do as the Romans do. Words to live by. If you don’t like what you’re doing, it’s time to look for another line of work. Unfortunately, almost everyone has been in similar situations and a good way to get along is try and conform to the office culture

Trying to fit into the corporate world - If you don’t feel like you’re being treated fairly at your job, there’s the door. - We encourage you to take your (meager) vacation time, but be sure to take your laptop and blackberry. If you’re brave enough to take the time off:

- You accrue vacation time throughout the year and you can’t carry any time over, but you can’t take the time because it hasn’t been accrued yet.

- We are merging sick time with personal leave, so make sure you don’t get sick or have a personal matter to attend to for more than 3 days.

- We want you staying home if you’re sick (don’t infect everyone) but you’ve been out twice already this year!! Oh, the stress of worrying about whether you should call in sick. BTW, I hadn’t take a sick day in the past 3 years at work.
We're sorry that someone very dear to you has died, but you'll have to take personal time off if you want to attend the funeral. If it was your dad (that maybe you haven’t talked to in 20 years) you could have 5 days off.

People are fine, but I just don’t have much in common as far as interests or worldview.

The department is very close (they often each lunch and socialize together) and when I try to talk to them casually or at company events, I feel like an outsider. Most of them are close to my age (mid 20’s to early 30’s), but many of them talk about pretty boring stuff or are of the unprofessional type described previously.

As a result of all this, I stopped eating lunch with these folks and I don’t really socialize with them outside of work. When I try to, I still really feel like an outsider. I want to move up to something more at my level professionally (it’s pretty entry level, this is my first job out of grad school) and get out of my department as soon as I can, but am I hurting my career by not eating with these folks or socializing with them? Some of the most unprofessional are moving up the most in my department! The department director said during my interview that he likes people who see the job as “more than a job” and that the department is very close, so I have the impression that hanging out with my coworkers is expected. I can’t stand eating with them and I would not want to spend time outside of work with most of them.

Perhaps the "misfit" (and, seriously, could you have used a more derogatory label?) has come into an already toxic environment with a group that lacks leadership, is already set in their ways, and don’t want to change. In an environment like that, someone who comes in and tries to
make proactive changes - which may be acknowledged to further the business - is always going to have trouble and is likely going to be the target of backlash. Be "quick to fire", as one commenter recommended on here as a positive, and the existing organization gets exactly what it wants, boots out the positive influence, and goes back to the negative status quo. Failing to consider the big picture of why a hire isn't working out is completely and totally irresponsible, and explains clearly why the HR system in most organizations is so broken.

If someone is a misfit, question zero should be "Is the reason this person fails to deliver an issue with them, or the organisation?"

There will always be people who don't necessarily fit in with an organizational culture. Obviously, they had/have the quals to be hired, so the best thing a leader can do is find a place where this individual can fit and help him get hired there. In the long run, it will benefit both the leader and his organization as there will be reciprocity and good will.

Career professionals agree that the culture of your office can mean as much for your happiness as your workload and your duties.

I know that work is work and isn't supposed to be a luxury holiday.

For some reason I no longer feel 'part' of the office environment and now an outsider if you understand what I'm saying.

I don't mind working in my new department; we are a very small company after all with all departments in the same
room but my three colleagues I work with (my manager is the exception) really hate me. Two are roughly my age (I'm 20) and the other is a middle aged woman who is very vocal and honest about her feelings so I'm usually called an idiot/moron/waste of space even when she is on the phone. You could call it bullying but it's not what I'm concerned about as I've been bullied much worse many times in the past, I'm quite stubborn as it is to give in to such offenses and I value a person's free speech. This has been the atmosphere over the last three months, up until a few days ago it didn't really effect me but now I'm starting to feel like this.

I'm guessing it's all in my head though due to its rather rapid and unexpected development. Do you think it's my brain just telling to move on with my life and leave my past behind (I have been after all unable to stop or decrease the number of people immediately disliking and bullying me despite fifteen years of trying.)

To Keep a Job, You Need to Fit Into the Work Culture - One Of The Most Persistent Mistakes People Make Is... not understanding the importance of fitting in in their work environments. Indeed, fitting in is something that enables you to both get and keep a job.

I feel like I just don't fit in here. There are only 11 people that work here and it has a "family"vibe. My office is on the end, so a lot of the chatter and "plan-making" are done far away from me. I always feel like I'm the last to know about things and that my opinions don't matter

Not all misfits are bad news. Bad companies often spit out good people because they are not in harmony with the sour discordance of the norm. Misfits are often the good guys and they are often victimised by the US habit of blaming
loners or misfits for all their problems. Before victimising misfits, perhaps you should check if they are what everyone should aspire to be rather than those to be fired in a fit of self righteous, self defeating, frequently misguided malice.

I enjoy the work and my colleagues a great deal, but I can’t shake the feeling like I might not be fitting into the office culture. I’ve only been interning there for a few weeks, and so part of me just thinks that I’m just experiencing regular awkwardness when you’re getting to know a group of people.

Beyond the general feeling that I’m not quite gelling in the office, there is one particular instance that sticks out at me. The director of my office originally invited me to the annual staff retreat when I started — at the time I thought it was a very decent gesture to make me feel included as a member of the staff and an above and beyond one for someone who was only interning in their office part-time. Near the end of last week, the director approached me and stated that after speaking with the staff she’d decided that she’d rather I not be present — she is stepping down after twenty years of service here, and apparently it is likely to be an emotional moment for the staff because it is the last time the whole staff will be together. She assured me that the decision was not personal — one of program coordinators they recently hired is also not attending for the same reason, apparently — and apologized to me. This seems like a legitimate reason to me, particularly since I was surprised to receive an invitation in the first place, but it still speaks to my nagging doubts that I’m not quite “fitting” here in the way that I’d like

My first instinct was that disinviting you from the staff retreat was weird, but then I started to rationalize it and I
thought it might be reserved for permanent time staff as a team-building activity. But the idea that they want this specific instance closed off to outsiders because it might be an emotional time is *really* weird. It might be a sign of the office culture or it might be that the director’s own quirkiness, but I don’t think they have the right idea about what a staff retreat is supposed to be used for. It’s to build and more coordinated team, and no way that’s happening if they see it as some sort of insiders-only event.

Disinviting you from the annual staff retreat was bizarre. And kind of rude. And it’s even more bizarre that she’s not inviting the new program coordinator, who’s presumably full-time and not an intern. Your boss wants to have an emotional moment with the staff because it’s “the last time they’ll all be together”? This isn’t a group of friends graduating from high school and singing Fleetwood Mac’s “Landslide” while getting all teared up that things just won’t be the same from now on. It’s a workplace. And it’s a staff retreat — the whole staff should be there. Someone above her should intervene and tell her to stop using it as her own personal send-off. This is so bizarre that you absolutely shouldn’t take it personally or as a reflection on you.

I cannot believe she uninvited you. That is so rude! Not being invited in the first place is one thing, but uninviting someone? Seriously rude. I second Alison’s comment: they are not graduating from high school. That makes your boss sound very cliquey and immature.

....typically the weirder the department culture the longer the director has been there. ”Love this—so true!”

One time, when I was in a new company, one of the other secretaries came up to me and told me all about the
birthday club the secretaries had, how every month they treated the ones with birthdays that month to lunch, gave little gifts, etc. Then she “invited” me to stay behind and cover all their phones while they all went out for a long lunch.

I never was invited to join the birthday club.

typically the weirder the department culture the longer the director has been there.”

Love this—so true! Maybe you need a bit more context to this quote!

To take a contrarian view, as a misfit myself but one who adds value to an organisation, I set my core values and beliefs myself and based on my professional body. I often see problems in big company culture and my outspoken and gregarious approach is I’ll-fitting but that doesn’t make me a problem. Indeed misfits can often improve a stagnant and poor workplace culture.

So, it was at my employ at this university I learned the cruelty, meanness, uncaring manner, arrogance, and stupidity of the human nature. I had seen physical violence, mental abuse (to the point the ambulance came to take this poor woman away), and death. The death was a really nice guy who was trying to do his best.

For God’s sake don’t stand out! Agree with your manager on everything and remember if it’s different it is to be feared.

The sooner you can come to the conclusion that the person will not ever be a good culture fit, the better for everyone involved.
The key to moving forward with less pain and considerably reduced use of your precious time is to remember that almost never do people change their stripes in order to fit in where they don’t actually belong in the first place.

The store is experiencing fall out from one of the manager’s approach to hiring staff in that it was too job spec focused rather than looking at the person and their fit within the ****culture as well. Misfit employees spring up displaying behaviours such as unexplained absences from their post, shouting matches on the shop floor and only last week a misfit employee physically threatened their manager.

Quite often a manager in their desperate need to get productivity up and running will not dig deeper to find out what is really happening for someone or two people involved in a problem situation. They seek a quick fix plaster over the wound. This has been shown to cause greater difficulties in the future because the unaddressed problem simmers away until triggered again, and it always is. Quite often, by then, the negative behaviour of the original respondent has leaked into the dynamics of the rest of the team and invariably dismissal is the only and last option because the business must be protected. (HR manager in a Global Retail Store, UK, 2016)

The discussions suggest that people perceive that they fit in because ‘you are liked’; do as they (the team, office, and clique) do, and see the job as more than just a job. You need to be part of the herd, to display same behaviour, socialisation approaches, and to share the same symbols. There were the odd one or two who advocated the path of being different and standing out from the
‘norm’ but these comments seem to come from onlookers to a situation rather than being in that environment and experiencing the emotional state of misfit themselves, which has been cited as a painful and unwanted emotion. It is easy therefore to pass judgment on a state that you are not part of or experiencing.

Organisational culture, particularly that coming from the immediate environment as demonstrated by a work group is it seems the biggest influence to triggering perceptions and feelings of misfit and will be considered in depth in the next chapter.

4.12 Summary of the analysis within selective (2nd level)

I have presented the emergence of empirical data, based on what the participants have presented rather than approaching it with a prescriptive approach with a theory to prove or disprove. Data have been subjected to the rigorous steps of constant comparative analysis and categories have emerged. These, despite all attempts to construct them free of any pre-existing knowledge has been, as generally recognised as an impossible thing to do so where there is a connection to extant fit /misfit literature, references are made. The stage reached now is that of demonstrating “the generation of emergent conceptualisations into integrated patterns which are denoted by their categories and their properties” (Glaser, 2002:23). The focus (1st level) coding process itself has also provoked me to think about the relationship between categories and their properties and dimensions (Heath & Cowley, 2004). One of the essential properties of conceptualisation for Grounded Theory studies is to take into account the features of time, place and people. I sought to do that by identifying as much as I could by looking at the participants posted profiles, nature of work and industrial sector was shown to see what that could tell me. There was, however, a paucity of useful
information – see Appendix C. To provide contextualisation where I could, I re-examined the causes of misfit from the perspective of the two players to the interaction and their multi-dimensions, the organisation and the individual and these I present at 4.12.1 Time, place and people – personal and organisational antecedents to feelings of misfit First, however, I show the progress of how and why the nine coded categories were condensed from nine to seven Table 16 Reduction of 9 coding categories to 7 (see Table 16 Reduction of 9 coding categories to 7) and then two, my core categories towards theory development in keeping with the foci within my theoretical model and carried forward for more detailed discussion in Chapter 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding category (2nd) level</th>
<th>Place within Theoretical Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Outcomes of misfit feelings (9) (unhappiness, depression, boredom)</td>
<td>Placed within ‘coping behaviour’, a consequence to feeling like a misfit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Misfits over time or trigger event (16) (changing attitudes/satisfaction)</td>
<td>Placed within the interaction between person and the organisational attributes, acting as a stress stimulus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. HR or management ineffective (18) (control and conflict)</td>
<td>Acts as a negative influence (external influencer) both to the stages of cognitive interpretation and re-interpretation of the interaction as well as the final consequences, those of coping behaviours or exit to the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Misfit or fit connected to demographics (29) (identity, values)</td>
<td>Incorporated in causal factor to misfit as coming from personal attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Wants to fit in or needs to fit to keep job (35) (survive and develop)</td>
<td>Acts as a positive influence (internal influencer) to the cognitive interpretation of the interaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The remaining 2 major classes (see Table 17 Core categories towards theory development) I have taken further as input to core category emergence which underpins my theory development. They assist in telling an analytical story that has coherence and comprehension because they carry substantive analytical weight and thus contain crucial properties that make the data meaningful (Charmaz, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Misfits seen in a positive light (55) (hopeful)</th>
<th>Acts as a positive influence (internal influencer) to the Misfit emotional state arrival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Strong feelings over sense of misfit (maverick) (59) (powerful)</td>
<td>Acts as a coping behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 | Outsider position - group influence (190) (homogeneity & need to prove self) |
9 | Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues (315) Exclusionary, ostracising power of the collective, damage to self-image |
4.12.1 Time, place and people – personal and organisational antecedents to feelings of misfit

I give attention now to both antecedents and feelings around misfit found from further examination of all data. These I have identified through constant comparison of the data influenced by the constructivist school of Grounded Theory Methodology that I have applied. That which “assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognises the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and viewed, and aims toward an interpretive understanding of subjects meanings” (Charmaz, 2006:250). This has involved going behind the stories that people tell, to gather the context in which they are discussed and presented (Bogard, 2001); and so goes towards answering the first of my research questions: What are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit?

Where a feeling of misfit, not fitting in, exclusion from a group, isolation either accidental or contrived by others is expressed, I examined the data within its context for a cause within the meaning of time, people and place. In other similar studies, for example, Williamson, (2013) identified those as connected to the individual, the organisation, and as coming in from the outside. Such as financial commitments, family responsibilities and difficulties about getting another job because of high external unemployment in South Africa, the area of the study. In the narratives within this study little importance was given to externalities because they were very rarely mentioned. Causes of misfit perceptions are expressed by discussants as either coming from the individuals themselves or the organisation as represented by a workgroup and its culture, supervisor, senior management or system processes. The phrases used are highlighted in Table 18 Antecedents to Misfit (expressed in the data)
### Table 18 Antecedents to Misfit (expressed in the data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents to Misfit (expressed in the data)</th>
<th>Broadly attributable to the individual</th>
<th>Broadly attributable to the Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>time, people, place</td>
<td>Different educational background (overqualified)</td>
<td>Cliquey organisational culture in dept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadly attributable to the individual</td>
<td>No power or control</td>
<td>Don’t like change or new people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
<td>Depressing people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadly attributable to the Organisation</td>
<td>Difficulty in communicating</td>
<td>Authoritative management style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different educational background (overqualified)</td>
<td>Difficulties with getting on with different personality types</td>
<td>Poor communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadly attributable to the Organisation</td>
<td>Shy and socially anxious</td>
<td>Lack of socialisation for newbies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No power or control</td>
<td>Low self-esteem</td>
<td>HR or managers not nipping problems in the bud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
<td>Inexperience</td>
<td>Not seeking cultural fit for new hires through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in communicating</td>
<td>Minority – age, gender, colour in the context of no one to immediately relate to</td>
<td>socialisation/induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different difficulties with getting on with different personality types</td>
<td>Past life experiences/events</td>
<td>Toxic environment with a group that lacks leadership,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low self-esteem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inexperience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minority – age, gender, colour in the context of no one to immediately relate to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Past life experiences/events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the antecedents for misfit attributable to either the person or organisation are negative. Where any positive factors were mentioned, such as creativity, innovation or visionary leadership they were in the context of describing the ‘misfit’ as a maverick which is a completely different construct and is therefore not included here. There are no specific instances of time mentioned, but the nuances of the data suggest that once the feelings of misfit become manifest in the conscious of the individual, they become constant. I move on now to consider whether there are any consequences to self and/or the organisation by an individual perceiving a sense of misfit that also satisfies research question 2. The consequences are shown in Table 19 Consequences of misfit there are only negative consequences, therefore nothing positive to show.

What are the consequences to self and perhaps others of feeling like a misfit?

Table 19 Consequences of misfit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequences of misfit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upon the individual</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistreatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels bullied by employer to conform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostracised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically ill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially excluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one to talk to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never &quot;one of the gang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of rejection hurts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel like an outcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels targeted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets an intuitive feeling of uneasiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel judged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel frozen out by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persecuted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit alone in another room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insecure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlooked for promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paranoia over possibility of snide remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid, hate, trapped, fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really limits ability to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone, dull and anxious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can see many and painful consequences that are demonstrated which begs the question of why carry on. Work, especially in the industrialised Western World (Super, 1982) represents a significant part of an individual's activities, driven as we are by the need to ‘succeed'. It follows therefore that a feeling of misfit and the negative emotion mood and emotion that goes with that mental state is likely to have consequences both upon the individual (worker) and the
work environ. These have been articulated above and some are quite serious. The next step would be to see what the coping mechanisms of both parties are likely to be to reduce the painful consequences experienced by individuals and to avoid reduced input and productivity from the organisation's point of view.

In this next section, these actions are presented. It can be seen that behaviours are not only presented by the misfits themselves but come from third parties who have been observers to the original posting. They represent advice from people who have either experienced the discussed situation themselves or act as management consultants. The information offered at Table 20 How to cope with Misfit which goes towards answering research question no. 3: How do employees manage their feelings or position of misfit?
### Table 20 How to cope with Misfit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping behaviour of someone who feels like a misfit, and advice was given.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I resort to things that make me happy, making really obnoxious jokes - puns, word play, random odd associations of things I make in my head, fidgeting with things at the desk because I am not happy with my surroundings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to do a really good job, and remain “above” petty bickering and office politics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try and fit in early on, based on previous experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have to stick it out until a new job comes up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, you don't have to play the game. Even if you take this bad advice and try – it is like high school; it would be obvious that you're a wannabe. What you do is you locate another job, with a game that suits you better. Office cultures vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris leave all ur problems at the front door when u walk in the office and just get on with it while having a little banter with colleagues. So long as they pay u properly and on time thats the main thing. if ur situation gets any worse i'd just play down and/or leave as it may be nothing personal. If ur too good at ur job u should be aiming for a different career but stepping on other peoples toes in something ur not meant for isn't such a good idea as some people have families to feed. toph III - just hang in there. Try not to let it bother you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am sick of feeling this way, and I mostly hold it inside and let it fester away at me, so here goes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I still feel like the helpless little junior high girl who’s just trying to fit in and can’t manage to do it and feels like crap because everyone else is having fun without her and doesn’t care. Argh!

Try and communicate with at least one or two people

Bring cakes into the office to share around

Adapt to the office culture so as to survive

My coping mechanisms included going for a walk, going for a drive, escaping mentally and physically whenever I could.

Often it’s really only your own mind and emotions that tell you that you don’t fit in. You may actually fit in fine, you just think of yourself as an outsider. It definitely doesn’t mean there’s anything wrong with you. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, “Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

You don’t want to change yourself just to fit in with a certain group of people. That’s where a lot of people go wrong. They end up wanting to gain approval from others and end up losing themselves in the process. You have so much more to offer by being true to yourself. So, don’t limit yourself to being the same as everyone else. Challenge yourself to be the absolute best you can be.

There are statements here from the ‘misfits’ which reflect deep senses of emotional pain and hurt, sometimes reflecting a replay of past experiences which goes on to increase the intensity of the inner feelings. The comments from fora discussants, however, in answer to the misfits’ cries are very straightforward and
practical, not resonating at all with the depth of pain expressed. The answer to resolving the problem as emanating from the individual (it’s their fault and due to their psychological makeup) as coming from all discussants is to ‘hang in there' until a new job can be found.

Ultimately though, it is an organisation that has the upper hand about the misfit's career prospects and well-being within its structures and systems, so it would be worth mentioning what actions could be taken to find ‘best' solutions’. Comments along these lines as posted by fora discussants and interviewees are shown in Table 21 What to do with someone who feels like a misfit.

Table 21 What to do with someone who feels like a misfit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What to do with someone who feels like a misfit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find them a new job/department within the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR counselling to identify root cause and resolve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get rid of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine relationship between employee and supervisor/team leader/team and resolve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine office culture for unintended consequences and change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What to do – lies with the individual’s psychology, dyadic relationships or it seems, the office culture. Actions which resonate with section 4.12.1 Time, place and people – personal and organisational antecedents to feelings of misfit –
wherein individuals themselves or from the organisation as represented by a
workgroup and its culture, supervisor, senior management or system processes.

4.12.2 Summary of Focus Coding Categories.

Through constant immersion in the data I have developed individual
categories through connecting categories and subcategories coming through from
the initial coding practice. I identified common themes as well as
interrelationships between groups and their order of impact to the individual and
the organisation. I arranged these in order of least occurrence to most frequently
identified influences/causes. Through further examination to identify causal
factors I grouped (1) as those that mainly seem to be arising from the person or
the organisation. From those causes, possible effects were detected and labelled
(2) ‘consequences', again as attributable to either the person or the organisation.
They were all in the negative.

Leading on from consequences of feeling like a misfit a third category is
also presented made up of comments from people experiencing a sense of misfit
as to how they coped with those feelings while at work. Included within that
commentary are tips from external observers as to how the misfit could best get
by. These three categories go towards answering the exploratory research
questions and are further explored within the context of the literature in chapter 5.

At the end of focus coding, theoretical codes and their relationships are
starting to coalesce (Urquhart et al., 2009) to identify causes and effects, though
contextualised more as influencers and outcomes, and probably not in a linear
direction. There are possible moderating and mediating variables appearing in the
data which interact to bring about feedback loops and spirals. However, due to
the nature of the data analysis I cannot say that these are moderating, or
mediating variable and I label them therefore as ‘influences’. These will be discussed in the next chapter, and in the context of a theoretical model which represents the final stage of this constructivist grounded theory study. I have constructed a model outside of the scope of the initial scoping research questions because of the rich contextual perspectives in which the experiences of misfit are presented by the discussants, and these I have captured to give a holistic picture to the state of affective misfit (Charmaz, 2006; Urquhart, 2013). In this, I represent and connect the participants' stories and experiences "in (ethically) the most faithful way possible” not only for the model but towards theory development out of the theoretical codes (Mills et al., 2008; Munhall, 2001:340)

4.13 Summary of theoretical coding

Data from one to one interviews with misfits and managers, WordPress fora and sixty internet open discussion fora were examined from the World Wide Web where organisational misfit and similar terms were mentioned. In the initial coding process, I identified nine major categories: Misfit or fit connected to the culture or socialisation issues, Misfit or fit connected to demographics, Misfits over time or trigger event, Misfits seen in a positive light, Outcomes of misfit feelings, Outsider position – group influence, Strong feelings over sense of misfit, Wants to fit in or needs to fit so as to keep job. I arranged them into an escalating order based on the numbers of references within each category and to include connections to each other to demonstrate conceptually similar categories. These are presented as second-order themes and theoretical dimensions showing the order of importance in the context of individuals and organisations and make up the focus (substantive) level of coding. For each category, I present uncensored
quotes from the respective data reference source to support and qualify the
category description.

The final stage of the Grounded Theory Methodology that of theoretical
coding, brings together the inputs from the all of the sources at the initial and:focus level codes including also initial referenced material from the literature.
This is expounded upon in the second literature review in chapter five which
serves as an input to theory development.

4.14 Theoretical coding as the final stage of GTM

Through a GTM this study looked to develop a theory that accounts for the
behaviour as highlighted in the data.

“Theoretical codes are integrative; they lend form to the focus codes you
have collected. These codes may help you tell an analytic story that has
coherence. Hence, these codes not only conceptualise how your substantive codes
are related, but also move your analytic story in a theoretical
direction” (Charmaz, 2006:63)

The major categories of phenomena that have come out of the analysis go
towards the construction of a new theoretical model (5.3) Model of misfit
cognition and affective processes, key findings as related to the research
questions, and new findings that have emerged from the data as well as a
definition of misfit that came out of the study and are discussed in Chapters 5
stage by stage and in the context of literature and taken forward to conclusion and
recommendations at the final chapter, 6.

4.15 Summary and conclusions

The point of view taken within this study, taking reference from the Journal
of Medical Research, is that people use internet discussion fora as one of a
portfolio of information sources to help them take control of managing health needs (Hewitt-Taylor & Bond, 2012; Pestello & Davis-Berman, 2008). To enable people to interact with others to discuss everyday issues and seek support around personal crisis issues (Hasler, Ruthven, & Buchanan, 2014) and certain socio-psychological needs (Louis Leung, 2013). Internet fora are a channel for an expression of voice and information gathering by perfectly ordinary people. In this case, I examined the ones around misfit aspects from people who have chosen to vocalise their feelings on open fora about their employers and the organisational environments, to find answers to my general and scoping 3 research questions.

Mention is made of ‘history repeating itself’ as events or interactions reflect previous life experiences. To ameliorate the hurtful feelings that arise people also talk about events and/or salient others which help them deal with any misfit or uncomfortable psychological activities that go on within the organisation, so indicating the importance of input from referent others. Often the posting is part of a dialogue, where the view as initially posted is taken as a personal presentation as to what is going on in an organisational environment, or suggestions are made as to how to change the dynamic and so make the poster feel better about themselves. In other cases, the posting seems to be an effort to get a better understanding of the situation that they are in and how to cope with it. All this rich contextual data, I explore further within Chapter 5 – Discussion of findings and additional literature review which enables me to present new findings over and above answers to the research questions and, to construct a model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes at 5.3 which depicts the misfit experience.
Chapter 5 – Discussion of findings and additional literature review

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I identified themes, their interrelationships, and inferred influences, as well as linkages, past and present, from people’s interactions with others at work. This chapter takes the analysis further and on to its last stage, to discuss the findings, categorise and link them together in line with works of literature, which interestingly, are outside of the field of person-environment (PE) fit. The findings relate to management literature but also sociology, social psychology, and health sciences. I identify new findings and present a model depicting the cognitive experience of two types of an organisational misfit, social misfits and mavericks The Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes (figure 5.3), pulls together the findings by showing: misfit antecedents; triggers and stimuli; the power of intangible experiences and previous life events; internal and external psychological influencers; new mental states; psychological consequences and feelings; and, finally, the consequences upon an individual and organisation. I also offer a definition of misfit as a contribution to the literature.

5.2 Discussion of categories

From the initial data analysis presented in chapter 4, nine focused categories emerged:

1. Outcomes of misfit feelings
2. Misfit over time or trigger event
3. HR or management ineffective
4. Misfit or fit connected to demographics
5. The need to fit in to keep job
6. Misfit seen in a positive light
7. Strong feelings over sense of misfit
8. Core - Outsider position – group influence
9. Core - Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues

I discuss each of these nine categories in the following headed sections. Categories eight and nine are taken forward as ‘core’ for theory building as they are the ‘capstone categories' ones which the other subordinates lead towards. I also go through each coding category to demonstrate my theoretical progress through them, their input to the research questions, key findings and the route into the new Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes (figure 5.3). For each category, I deliberate theoretical perspectives to show how findings relate to the PE fit and other pieces of literature.

5.2.1 Category 1 - Outcomes of misfit feelings

There were 9 references to outcomes of misfit feelings which relate to the third research question: how do employees manage their feelings of misfit? The results suggest that feeling as one doesn't fit in has an impact on the individual to the extent that it seems that productive interaction is affected because the individual is ‘switched off’ or not fully engaged. There is no indication there wasn't a sense of fit in the first place, the comments are how a person is feeling at this moment in time, perhaps indicating a low-level sense of misfit that could escalate if not addressed. Indeed, at times it looks as if it has, after reading into the painful emotional process that people are experiencing. The material from this category I incorporate within ‘coping behaviour'. A consequence to feeling like a misfit, and is represented as the final stages in the model at section 5.3 Model of
misfit cognition and affective processes. As an input there are comments coming through the data such as:

so I resort to things that make me happy, making really obnoxious jokes - puns, word play, random odd associations of things

Change everything. You be the bubbly, sweet person who everyone comes to

I felt ostracised and almost became ill over the way I was treated…….

5.2.2 Category 2 - Misfit over time or trigger event

There were 16 references to misfit over time or trigger events which relate to the first research question: what are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit? Reading of the fit and misfit literature sensitised me to circumstances that are viewed by an employee as inducing a sense of misfit, so it was a circumstance that I was already aware of despite attempts to approach the data as a ‘blank sheet' and be open for what is relayed. That being said, it is generally accepted that nothing remains constant and that both people and the organisational environments change over time, in an incremental way or as a result of a more major change such as new structures, leadership or strategy (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007). Moreover, the effects derived as an output from PE fit (or misfit) are cognitively fed back into the PE fit (or misfit) cognitive process. In which levels of fit (and misfit) are constantly "being negotiated by affective experience” (any sentimentally commanded encounter/interaction with another individual) (Yu, 2009:1213). With ‘affect' as the moods and emotions generated within the individual (Brief & Weiss, 2002).
For people who have been employed for some time the data is suggesting that a likely trigger for feeling like a misfit appears to be around something changing. For example, a new event or interaction with a new person, over which the respondent has little or no control to influence either the person or the immediate environment. As one discussant said,

“Sometimes it’s because that something has gone particularly wrong. Sometimes it’s because it just isn’t working out anymore”. Or, “You can also become a misfit when you no longer mesh with what you were doing. I think people change over time and need to be able to move into other things”. 

These opinions suggest that incremental change may manifest as an internal battle especially if the circumstance is in opposition to a person’s natural proclivity to conform, or connects to a previous negative emotional experience. That conflict may also arise because, in keeping with Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity theory, people naturally covet group membership also cohering with the evolutionary perspective of membership desirability (Henrich & Boyd, 1998; Van Vianen & Stoelhorst, 2007) in the face too of changing environments. 

People are experiencing changes over the organisational lifespan whether it be incremental or rapid change and/or increasing diversity. People themselves are also undergoing changes in self and against any one of the changing multi-dimensions of fit variables within an organisation. And, those subtle life changes can redefine life priorities and the meaning of success (Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Wheeler et al., 2005). The suggestion here is that when a new situation or person interaction occurs the individual revisits previous similar social situations, called prototypes, as a mental frame of reference. Each person has their own unique prototype acquired primarily through classical
conditioning, and that inputs into behaviour either in a negative or positive way (Cantor, Mischel, & Schwartz, 1982). Thus, according to Krahé, 1982:113 it is held that “individuals learn to associate positive or negative emotions with a certain stimulus, and these emotions, in turn, determine subsequent behaviour. If a stimulus elicits negative emotions, this will lead to avoidance or escape reactions”. The data in this study appears to only show up in a negative sense. In the negative, commentary has been made around coping behaviours adopted by the participants, but the aspect of leaving the employ is not mentioned beyond wishful thinking. These results might go some way to answering Talbot & Billsberry, (2008:3) and a more recent study (Follmer et al, in press) question “do misfits leave?” No, they do not appear to do so.

In summary, a felt state of misfit can, therefore, occur at any point in one’s career. The outcome of these triggers, altered perceptions and/or behaviour are included as ‘coping behaviours' within the conceptual model, 5.3 Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes. This second category ‘misfit over time or trigger event’ blends in well with the next connected category ‘HR or management ineffective’. It is also a fit variable that has been identified in the extant literature (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007), to be of importance for a person’s sense of misfit, that is from the person – supervisor interaction (Talbot, 2010). Similarly, in an empirical study reported by (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010) 25% of people interviewed from a sample set of 44 claimed that their sense of misfit lay with managerial influence. I now examine this aspect in the context of the data.

5.2.3 Category 3 - HR or management ineffective

There were 18 references to HR or management ineffective which relate to the first research question: what are the reasons behind organisational members’
feelings of misfit? These business functions are part of an organisation’s structure, processes and systems and therefore, I place within Table 18 Antecedents to Misfit (expressed in the data). The data on websites, fora and from people interviewed around this subject heading were either employees talking about their own experiences, managers talking about their employees, HR managers dealing with people identified as not meeting the requirements of their roles or from management consultants based on their experiences across firms. The statements come from sources that had headings such as ‘The Trouble With Hanging On To Workplace Misfits’ which started off by labelling people mentioned therein who had different work attitudes and behaviours as misfits when really, they may not be. The term misfit was bandied about by discussants to label others who misfit in a variety of circumstances. After coding the data and reviewing the comments, they seem to define a ‘misfit’ as someone who, in the words of one of the (supervisory) discussants "is just a bad employee". Someone whose capabilities or interest no longer fit the job for which they were employed, or not fitting in well with the rest of the team. They misfit in the sense of it as a verb, not a noun, and in the context of person-job fit, based on the matching of particular knowledge, skills and abilities required by the job (Caldwell & O’Reilly, 1990).

This stance is somewhat at odds with employees' postings who felt that they needed to fit in over and above the job specifications. They considered that to misfit, to have a distance from the job and/or work team is not viewed well by a team manager. These opinions also resonate with the literature on person-group/team fit, where an individual fitting in is necessary with the work team on many characteristics such as goals (Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001). Values
(Adkins et al., 1996), and dispositional traits such as personality (Barsade, Ward, Turner, & Sonnenfeld, 2000).

In summary, there was not a great deal mentioned within the data about managerial action which suggests that there isn't a significant contributor or cause to some one's sense of misfit. That being said, administrative inaction appears to have a negative influence on people's cognitive processes and thus why ‘HR or management ineffective’ is presented as an external influencer within ‘referent others’ in the Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes at 5.3. The next section looked at the data that emerged that touches upon the issue of relational demographics.

5.2.4 Category 4 - Misfit or fit connected to demographics

There were 29 references to misfit or fit connected to demographics which relate to the first research question: what are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit? Misfit was discussed in the context of a person not fitting in with the majority attribute of the work environment, for example, a black woman working in an office of white men. The race was not a problem in causing her to feel like a misfit. It was in her opinion the fact that they were socially inept people and she couldn't relate to them at that level. For the young man in his twenties working in an office populated by old women in their 50s, he misfitted because he had nothing at all in common with them. Then there was the person who felt like a misfit because they were more educationally qualified than the rest of the group.

Calling upon studies around the multi-dimensions of fit lead me to consider that the interactions indicated in the blogs are those occurring at a dyadic level, person to person (PP) as far as values and culture were concerned (Van Vianen,
222

2000), but I think that it is simpler than that. The senses of misfit are connected to relational demographics within groups around the degree (or not) to which an individual's demographic attributes are shared by other members of a social unit (Riordan, 2000). The sense about interactions person to people. People like to be around people who are similar to themselves (Milliken & Martins, 1996). That is not the case here.

These data indicate that there are no common factors of age, race, gender and educational background which the literature says can hinder the promotion of an individual's self-identity and impact negatively on the organisation. Because of the whole diverse group's lowered psychological attachment (Ellis Aimee & Tsui, 2007; Tsui et al., 1992). The literature discusses good fit for age, gender and race for positive outcomes in the context of reduced turnover, increased group social interaction, similarity and influence of attitudes over time. As well as excellent communication and satisfaction and higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Chatman, 1991; O’Reilly et al., 1991; Verquer et al., 2003). For lack of fit, the empirical evidence is indicating that increased diversity or demographic heterogeneity in groups could provide adverse outcomes from those already mentioned before (Chatman & Flynn, 2001; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998).

Rumblings of those adverse outcomes come out in this category, by people who were in the minority within their workgroup. Although there were only 29 comments (from a total of 726 for all groups) made on relational demographics they cohere with findings from recent misfit studies. In New Zealand and Australia (Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009) found that variables said to influence feelings of misfit were sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, race,
age and stage of development. For a South African study (Williamson, 2013), the race was mentioned as the most significant influence on a person's sense of misfit. However, Williamson's (2013) study was carried out in South Africa where racial tension is still noticeable despite affirmation actions in the workplace. Therefore, particular environmental factors such as systems and laws may impact on people for perceptions of misfit.

As part of the grounded theory methodology approach, I was continually re-examining the data, and the results around demographics are still meagre. I have therefore incorporated the aspects presented under ‘demographics' into antecedent factors to misfit as coming from personal attributes, as highlighted below:

Individual causes to misfit perceptions - summaries are taken into Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes at 5.3

- Different educational background (overqualified)
- No power or control
- Lack of confidence
- Difficulty in communicating
- Difficulties with getting on with different personality types
- Shy and socially anxious
- Low self-esteem
- Inexperience
- Minority – age, gender, colour in the context of no one to immediately relate to

What was more pressing for the discussants they said was the need to fit in and to be seen to fit in so that they could keep their job. They started in employ wanting and expecting to fit in yet that wasn't happening, but they can't afford the
luxury of finding another job. They continued in the hope that the position around their misfit thoughts would change.

5.2.5 Category 5 - The need to fit in to keep job

There were 35 references to the need to fit in to keep job, about how people manage their feelings to keep a job which relates to the third research question: How do employees manage their feelings or position of misfit? Participants’ discussions on the subject of keeping a job demonstrate that they feel that it is more than doing a good job, even a “kickass one”. There are many people with similar vital skills and abilities, so it's about the next most important aspect, that of fitting in to demonstrate input to group/organisational performance and competitive advantage (Ployhart, 2012; Schneider et al., 2012). Importantly for the discussants here, their activities within work at an individual level are about keeping your job, financial stability and security. The aspect of fitting in or misfitting has moved out of the realm of talking about applicant fit is suitable for all parties as based on logical argument and so described by Rynes & Gerhart, (1990) as necessary on many fronts, satisfaction good behaviours and attitudes to name but a few. The data show the actual reality of fit/misfit from an employee's perspective, where on a day to day basis, they seek to suppress their feelings of upset, to be seen to fit in to make sure that they don't lose their job. They 'cope' as best they can or leave. A third option is that some people have sought to protect and glorify their misfit state by reframing it into something positive, such as being a maverick. The reason being is that this type of misfit is often revered in popular press and respondents console themselves with this fact, and it is just that they haven’t yet been recognised. That new state I show in the Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes 5.3 as a coping behaviour.
5.2.6 Category 6 - Misfit seen in a positive light

There were 55 references to misfit seen in a positive light which are in the context of people reframing ‘negative’ misfit into ‘positive’ maverick and relates to the third research question 3: how do employees manage their feelings of misfit? To misfit is ‘trendy and in vogue in common parlance at the moment, with the likes of Steve Jobs (co-founder of Apple), Bill Gates (Microsoft) already mentioned as such by the website discussants. To misfit is seen as standing out from the (mundane), to be able to see problems from multiple angles, and can be the (only) creative ones. People “who’ve never quite fit neatly into its drab, bureaucratically predefined, dumbed-down boxes”. It may well be that these respondents really mean ‘mavericks’? - a person who thinks and acts independently, often behaving differently from the expected or usual way (Cambridge Dictionary, 2016).

Individuals who take a positive perspective on misfit see themselves as people who care little for formal company procedures, who kick against hierarchy and bureaucracy because they stand in the way of organisational creativity and innovation. Mavericks display attributes such as self-confidence, individuality, wanting to lead, outspoken and as such are actively recruited for – seen as agents as necessary change, to lead from the front or the back. In the context of this study, the category ‘misfits seen in a positive light' might be a demonstration of how people seek to reframe their misfit state into one that has a positive connotation and also a way of them coping and this is reflected in the section that shows ‘new mental state arrival’. The commentary presented talks of misfit as a ‘state' which I contend should be termed maverick, but whatever they express they seem to be rationalising their state of misfit as a way of coping with it. To
misfit is something that is beginning to show as a deeply felt emotion, and elicits strongly worded commentary. Something that is demonstrated through the following similar sounding, but not the same sort of category.

5.2.7 Category 7 - Strong feelings over sense of misfit

There were 59 references to strong feelings over sense of misfit. The feelings presented here express strong points of view about the psychological state of misfit as noticed in famous others, or as an attribute pinned on others or self who are viewed as misfits, people who will drive the organisation through breaking the bureaucratic red tape. The category here demonstrates what people feel once they appear to have moved into 6) a new mental state arrival leading onto 7) psychological consequences. An example statement from this group says:

"We need to treat others with the respect that we ourselves demand. The best investment a person can make is to each other. Human beings are our most precious natural resource. Therefore, I am a misfit, because I teach Business Etiquette, to be a person of "more humility, imagination, creativity, empathy, trust, respect, wisdom."

This category seven has been merged with the following core category eight because the level of strong feelings from 7 connects to issues arising from 8, that is, from personal level forces and influences within work groups.

5.2.8 Category 8 – Core - Outsider position – group influence

The last category had 59 references attached to it; this one jumps up to 190 references as relating to outsider position – group influence and seems very much connected to the discussants’ need for belongingness, social inclusion and
identity through desired group membership, self-esteem and the wish to negate ostracism and the replay of negative past experiences. The data analysis relates to both the first research question: what are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit? and the second question: what are the consequences to self and perhaps others of feeling like a misfit? The comments come from people who would love to join in with the office/departmental/functional group. Despite attempts to join in, the respondents seem to perceive themselves still to be on the outside and feelings are polarised between crippling self-blame and power of the exclusivity and ostracising practices of the ‘in group’. The expressed feelings of exclusion give the impression that there are damaging effects on the psychological makeup of the people involved as already demonstrated by the language they have used to explain this state and posted to fora that make up this category:

"I'm solidly pro-misfit but let's not downplay exactly how painful being forced to endure "having a part of your body being torn out of you every day by a bird, only to have it grow back just to be torn out again"

It's been the story of my life...always the outsider. I get to think I'll never make any headway....because there is something fundamentally, unalterably flawed in me

“I have just started a new job and I have been there for three months. I was forced to apply for this job due to redundancy and i've gone from working in an environment that is really sociable and bubbly to a really mundane, small office where the entire workforce
are really clicky people who don't seem to like change and view newbies as outsiders, irrelevant”

I AM SICK OF IT!!! I put myself out there, and try to be sociable, and get shot down all the time. I happen to think I'm fun to hang out with, and I'll never understand this. I just want a happy, easy social life where I don't feel like I'm "begging” people to hang out with me or guilting them into it...or something....

“I Am being treated like an outcast at my work. I am being set up by supervisors and employess and then laughed at behind my back. Not told information about work scheledule [sic] changes, and intimidation tactics.

I'd be paranoid they'd start with the snide remarks out loud.

The expressed feelings, both psychological and physiological, brought together from the data and presented in Table 19 Consequences of misfit are all reflected as outcomes in the literature as connected to ostracism (see section 5.2.8.6).

5.2.8.1 Points of theory

Points of theory coming out of this Category 8 – Core - Outsider position – group influence that apply to these perceptions and represent stressors are around:

1. Fit to the group
2. Belongingness
3. Social inclusion and identity through desired group membership for
5. Fear of ostracism

These points are discussed in turn in the sections that follow. What also seems to be relevant are that people’s cognitive processes, their reasoning behind feeling the way that they do, seem to be coloured by mental replays, and the pain that goes with them of past experiences as they influence present and future fit/misfit perceptions. These points are included within figure 5.3, *Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes*.

From the organisational environment aspect, I am mindful of the fact that the ‘group’ may have reasons for excluding an individual, such as that person not conforming to the group norms/values and is thus ostracising them as a way of punishment (Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001). Perhaps dishing out the silent treatment for workplace deviant behaviours is designed to get an individual back into the group fold (Williams, Shore, & Grahe, 1998) which as we know from the literature is a considerable threat to an individual’s sense of belongingness and self-esteem. I am only looking at the interactions between group and individual from the latter’s perspective. The data shows that despite many attempts there are still some people who cannot fit into a group as an accepted member and feel in a state of misfit because of that exclusion, and that, it is the most adverse of human experiences (van Prooijen, van den Bos, & Wilke, 2004). The expressed emotional pain of that inability to join a group of apparently similar people at work is due in part because of the basic human need to fit in for positive, affective and interpersonal bonds (Henrich & Boyd, 1998; van Prooijen et al., 2004). Thus to feel like a misfit to a group, ostracised from it, and/or excluded from relevant information is a painful and an unwanted state of
emotional distress to be in (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Higgins & Kruglanski, 2000).

Groups are important. In the literature review (chapter 2), person-group (PG) fit and its desirability to an organisation, because of a team's higher level of effectiveness (DeRue & Morgeson, 2007; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005; Seong, Kristof-Brown, Park, Hong, & Shin, 2015), was discussed. It was also noted that group membership enables an individual's sense of self-identity as coming from the social identity theory of Tajfel & Turner (1979), but that little is known in fit research about the psychological aspects when group membership is either denied to a person or when they perceive their misfit with the group. A contribution to understanding the person side input to that dimension I offer here, and to include theoretical models outside of the fit discipline which represent the importance of the feelings of the discussants, such as belongingness (Baumeister, and Leary, 1995). This will go towards explaining the misfit affective state coming from misfit to group membership. I also offer a discussion around a person's perception of misfit to the group as coming from previous life experiences, which it seems are being replayed in the present time frame. Before, that an outline of person-group (PG) fit is presented from the perspective of its place as an element of the organisational environment to give context to my discussion of findings from the data.

5.2.8.2 Fit to the group - (PG) fit – need for as an influencer

Person-group fit (PG) exists where there is interpersonal congruence between an individual and other members of the immediate work group (Adkins et al., 1996; Kristof-Brown, Barrick, et al., 2005). The managerial desire for groups of people working happily and synergistically together within organisation
teams is an increasingly common occurrence. Because of the increased (profitable) output that they can generate, and if working well can be an inimitable resource, group work is a key to competitive advantage (Barney & Hesterley, 2010; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005; Ployhart, 2012).

Congruence of an individual to a group is usually looked at from two perspectives; firstly and often, it is from a supplementary aspect when “a person supplements, embellishes, or possesses characteristics which are similar to other individuals in the environment” (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987:269). Or secondly, it may be viewed from a complementary one based on a ”weakness or need of the environment if offset by the strength of the individual, and vice versa” (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987:271; Jee Young Seong & Kristof-Brown, 2012).

For supplementary fit, values-based measures are often looked at to match individual and organisational measures (Kristof, 1996) because of value congruence, the principles regarded as essential links into social identity in which people define themselves by being in a group of similar others. For complementary fit, the key skills and abilities (KSAs) provided fit in with what is required in the team. Once into the group people define themselves through that group identity (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011; Tajfel, 1982). People with similar characteristics to the group are also naturally attracted to it poses (Byrne, 1971) in his similarity-attraction paradigm, and that attraction leads to a high level of interpersonal liking, commitment to the group and wishes for its success. Success from group formation on some outcomes have also been measured and they indicate positive relationships with co-worker focused results, including co-worker satisfaction and general attitudes of job satisfaction (Kristof-Brown,
Zimmerman, et al., 2005; Jee Young Seong & Kristof-Brown, 2012; Vogel & Feldman, 2009). Group membership most importantly helps develop a person's self-concept by the group reflecting positive aspects of that person which they incorporate within 'self' (Crocker & Major, 1989; van Knippenberg, 2000). Groups are thus important, that is, the interactions with co-workers and aspect that has already been identified as the most important when looking at the multi-dimensions of perceived fit in the Edwards and Billsberry (2010) study which was discussed at 2.4.3 within the literature review chapter 2.

Possible antecedents to misfit perceptions concerning co-workers have already been examined against what is known from the literature on demographic characteristics (Elfenbein & O’Reilly, 2007; Kristof, 1996) and Category 4 - Misfit or fit connected to demographics but there were no factors that stood out. Nor it seems are people talking in the terms normally used in the fit literature, to look at and measure person-group (PG) fit, that is, to focus on similarity through personality and values. The data are showing that people are deliberating and consulting others about ‘the group’ in their workplace from the personal aspects of their need for belongingness (positive) and no ostracism (negative).

5.2.8.3 Belongingness – need for as an influencer

No matter how self-sufficient human beings are, we innately need to be part of a group for our survival and sense of wellbeing that goes with that membership (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Pervin, 1981; Van Vianen & Stoelhorst, 2007). Category 8 an Outsider position – group influence, shows that for people to be kept out of a group and/or ostracised is emotionally painful. At the second psychological level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, if security is not met, a deficiency need is presented (Maslow, 1968; Sommer et al., 2001) and highlights
what is generally known, that people have an innate desire to feel as if they belong to a group. We have an evolved, natural and robust yearning for social belonging and the human interpersonal interactions that go with that need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009). Moreover, those communications need to be pleasant and frequent, in an atmosphere of concern for each other and to be temporally stable, rather than fleeting with a changing sequence of people. A sense of fit in the context of PE fit accrues a sense of belonging to individuals (Mitchell et al., 2001).

A lack of belongingness brings about deprivation and some psychological ill effects such as increasing anxiety (Baumeister, and Leary, 1995). People also experience intense mental distress, depression, harm to self-esteem and meaningful existence (Sommer et al., 2001), aspects which have already been demonstrated through the data in the comments that people have voiced. Social exclusion is also mentioned, which in academic terms, is purposefully conducted in the sense of ostracism by groups at work which also negatively impact an individual in the sense of feeling alone, dull and anxious (Jones, Carter-Sowell, Kelly, & Williams, 2009; Williams et al., 1998). This comes through in emotive words that discussants have used in their online discussions. Additionally, in this category, discussants are talking about there being no required support from (group) others to a person's self-concept, ‘the individual's belief about himself or herself, including the person's attributes and who and what the self is (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

5.2.8.4 Social inclusion and identity - need for as an influencer

In the previous section, I referred to the literature (section 2.4.3 Person-group (PG) fit ) and discussed the importance of group membership. Groups
shape people's psychology through the capacity for their attributes to be internalised and thus contributing to a 'sense' of self; that is, groups provide us with a sense of social identity (Haslam et al., 2009; Postmes, Haslam, & Swaab, 2005). The notion of identity is associated with questions such as “who am I?” or “who are we?” but in organisational terms, it is often called social identity theory and by its sister approach, self-categorisation theory (SIT/SCT). For this work, I use the former description that means, according to its original author Tajfel (1978: 63) “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership”. I proceed with an additional discussion on the data and related literature, to explore the reasons behind feelings of misfit.

The social identity formation comes about as a result of a group's interactions at a dyadic level, through communications, conceptualisation and negations around what defines correct group membership (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2015). The focus can be on shared thoughts, characteristics and beliefs, which in the language of ‘fit' is around values (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Kristof, 1996). Those deeply held beliefs of the group impact on the psychology of the individual by their power to become internalised within a person's social identity, this being a basic drive around a person's self-enhancement which could lead to an upsurge in their self-esteem (Haslam et al., 2009). Social identities are shared by members and distinguish between groups (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008) with, at a micro level, a person’s self-concept tied to the collective or role. In short, a person’s self-concept is very much connected with the level of self-identity that they get from a referent group (van Knippenberg, 2000).
Furthermore, the internal dialogue that an individual has concerning formations of self-perception is informed “by the often conflicted and divided voices that surrounds us all” (Burkitt, 2013:267) and from “past experiences, preferences, needs and values” (Schneider, 1983:8).

I just have an experience of people not liking me when I want to know them.

The department is very close (they often each lunch and socialize together) and when I try to talk to them casually or at company events, I feel like an outsider.

The discussant here is indicative of some of the comments made about desiring entry and fit to the group along with the “knowledge that [they] belong to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to [them] of this group membership” (Tajfel, 1972:31). In the organisational workspace it is through group membership that we define who we were, not only for input to our self-concept (van Knippenberg, 2000) but also as a function of our similarities and differences with others (Reicher, Spears, & Haslem, 2012). To be part of a group, an individual also needs to be psychologically intertwined with its fate and progress (ibid). That position is not reflected in the statements made by discussants in this category. Indeed, the people in this study have said that they want to be part of a group, to be socially included but feel that they are not, and the emotions coming from that exclusion/misfit sound psychologically painful: they sense that they are ‘outside’, which is not what they want. These individual needs cohere with one of the fundamental premises of PE fit, that of psychological need fulfilment, and represented within the needs-supply equation.
which represents the degree to which a person's needs are satisfied by the organisational environment. This measure is usually assessed around values (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005; Rokeach, 1973), but as I have previously mentioned ‘values’ is not reflected by the data, it is deeper than that.

A sense of misfit occurs when people make a cognitive comparison of what they see as a desired psychological resource and that perceived to be supplied by the organisational environment. Psychological need fulfilment theories say that "people become dissatisfied when the supply provided by the environment falls short of what the person desires" (Cable & Edwards, 2004:824). The data here is indicating what people see that they need and want – group acceptance and membership for a sense of social identity, which might include shared values. This coheres with what Cable & Edwards (2004:824) go on to pose, “a social identity perspective suggests that value congruence should be more fundamental than psychological need fulfilment as a predictor of employee attitudes”. This coheres with the personal journey towards self-actualisation, which also produces positive attitudes and behaviour (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Edwards & Shipp, 2007). The point at which data from this study differs from these theories however is that the values of the group do not always reflect those of the organisation which is accepted in the fit domain as to why people join certain types of institutions, which fits in with their values and is a public expression of those. There is only one mention of a group demonstrating ostracising behaviours; the other situations are from discussants’ perceptions, perhaps not
always it seems in the reality of the here and now, but affected by past experiences.

I got along with all of them, but the three girls were a complete clique and would always go for lunch, walks, etc. together and get together outside work. I would chat with them and have decent conversations, but I was never “one of the gang.” Never went out with them outside work, though they did all come to a housewarming party I had a couple years ago. I’m going to be 30 years old next year, and I still feel like the helpless little junior high girl who’s just trying to fit in and can’t manage to do it and feels like crap because everyone else is having fun without her and doesn't care. Argh! I don’t feel pathetic—until other people make me feel that way”

What is illustrated here is not only someone’s desire and longing to be part of a social group and the feelings of rejection that go with it but the current experience is being viewed through the lenses of past experiences. This exacerbates the initial hurt and makes sense of the experience for the individual, which also connects to a person’s self-esteem.

5.2.8.5 Self-esteem and worth as influencers

The cognitive content of the self-varies across persons because we all have varying collections of schema (Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984). A person's self-system, the feelings, thoughts and other elements that are associated with a person's sense of self, and is the basis of an explanation of an individual's social behaviour and it is this that supports cognitive processes (Ashford & LeCroy, 2009). The self-schema can also vary between positive and negative, and group membership can supply the part of self-concept that is missing or requires
bolstering, to satisfy needs (Markus, 1987). Group membership, however, provides more than a sense of belonging and is a factor well acknowledged and discussed in organisational literature. It leads to supporting self-esteem which we all need to feel upbeat, self-confident and capable (Steele, 1988; Tesser, 1988; Wortman & Brehm, 1975) as cited in Williams & Sommer (1997). The data are showing up deep-felt emotions through this second largest category around ‘outsider position – group influences' which led me to pose the first of my three findings and contributions and initially presented in this chapter at section 5.3.7

In the study, the stressors and influences that I see as leading to this subset of misfits to vocalise their upset is around the topics that were presented at section: Points of theory 5.2.8.1. These stressors which are often hidden or consciously unknown appear to have triggered old feelings and experiences as well as the negativity connected to them coming from much more profound issues:

Some individuals, due to a "vulnerability" in their make-up— which may be behavioural/temperamental in character (e.g., difficult temperament), physiological or endophenotypic (e.g., highly physiologically reactive), or genetic in origin are disproportionately or even exclusively likely to be affected adversely by an environmental stressor. That stressor may be child maltreatment, insensitive parenting, or adverse life events, to name but three ................ (Belsky & Pluess, 2009:885)

Fear of or actual ostracism connects to deep emotions and around threats to instinctive needs and plays a substantial part of the data so the literature on ostracism is explored in further detail in the next section.
5.2.8.6 Fear of Ostracism – influencer

I presented an argument in section 5.2.8.2 for an individual acquiring, through their membership of a group, many critical aspects of their thoughts, feelings, and social behaviour, and the importance and fundamental need to be part of a group, (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Smith, Murphy, & Coats, 1999). This involves the importance of a sense of belonging acquired through that acceptance, and how it is a fundamental requirement for feelings around safety, meaningful existence, social identity, and self-esteem (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Williams, 2007). Ostracism is said to threaten a sense of belonging “more clearly and more strongly than other unpleasant social responses” (Williams & Zadro, 2004:5) and that action is clearly and painfully mentioned by the bloggers in this study.

Ostracism, being ignored and/or excluded, are key themes in the data and are used to describe exclusion, which is about “ignoring and excluding individuals or groups by individuals or groups” (Williams, 2007:425). More specifically workplace ostracism is when an individual or group omits to take actions that engage another organisational member when it is socially appropriate to do so, and that loss of engagement at a social level offers a significant threat to belonging (Robinson, O’Reilly, & Wang, 2013). Discussants mention the painful feelings that go with what they perceive to be purposeful exclusion in that they have been ignored or excluded either by one person or the whole group. They want to be part of the desired group and want to be invited in, yet that is not happening. Sometimes the exclusion, perceived or otherwise, maps against previous similar life experiences, but whatever the case, the ostracism triggers
many adverse psychological outcomes which cohere with what is presented in ostracism literature around this pervasive phenomenon.

Once a person senses any acts of ostracism, an immediate reflexive action as a form of both physical and mental pain and distress is created (Williams & Nida, 2011; Williams & Zadro, 2005) The discussants highlight this through words such as sadness, frustration, anger, disengagement, puzzlement, rejection, feelings of unworthiness; all of which cohere with the ostracism, self-esteem, identity and belongingness literature (Williams, 2007; Williams & Sommer, 1997). The expressed emotions are at the most basic psychological level, those as connected to a survival need, even bringing about thoughts of death. Because rejection and ostracism affect self-worth and identity, they present, therefore, a threat to an individual's sense of meaningful existence (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary, 1990; Steele, Kidd, & Castano, 2014; Williams, 2007). Sometimes also the discussants mention previous similar experiences of ostracism which are talked about in very painful terms, cohering with ostracism literature that says "even recollections of short-term ostracism can retrigger the original pain associated with the event.…. and although ostracism or exclusion may not leave external scars, it can cause pain that often is deeper and lasts longer than a physical injury" (Williams & Nida, 2011:2). This suggests quite strongly that such a situation is one that will be avoided wherever and whenever possible.

Often the ostracised do not know how they how they have got to that unwanted state. They are left to figure out (a) that they are being isolated, and (b) the possible reason for it. Without being given the specific cause, targets seek to generate plausible reasons for its occurrence, some right, some wrong, in the view of other discussants to the fora, but always against a background where that
individual, is continually manoeuvring and interacting in ways that get them back into a role of acceptance. Individuals attempt to reduce the feelings coming from perceived or real ostracism which are reported as sadness, disengagement, passivity, rejection and loneliness (Sommer et al., 2001), all again cohering with the data reported in this study. It appears that the discussants have taken to social media to find ways of ameliorating those feelings, to get back some form of control, to find meaning within their organisational lives and for the reasoning of the perpetrators of the ostracism. Without such connections, the psychological path leads to thoughts around mortality salience and that is why, to sociologists and anthropologists, social ostracism is often termed ‘social death’ because the sufferer feels as if they might as well be dead (Zygmunt Bauman, 1992; Králová, 2015). Strong feelings and ample commentary are also demonstrated through the next and last core category which underpins my theory development, and the findings reported in Chapter 6. Before that I look further into ostracism.

5.2.8.6.1 Adult Attachment Theory – ostracism

The feelings of ostracism such as exclusion, rejection and being ignored by others (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2005) could be, I posit, be relevant in the context of Adult Attachment Theory Bowlby (1973) and the affective bonds that people make with one another in adult life based on the emotional relationships they experienced in early childhood from primary caregivers. For example, a baby suffers emotional rejection, deprivation or incorrect care from their parent and at worst will grow up to with an insecure, emotional base, seeking then to fill that void by dependant attachment to others, or not venture into new situations (Bowlby & Ainsworth, 1992; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). At best, they will cognitively select the best experiences and unconsciously block out the worst bits,
and grow up perfectly fine with the ability to regulate adult attachment behaviours in response to threats. If a person has had a tremendous young experience, then they are likely to find this transition much more comfortable. It is to be also said that the development of personalities is also involved which also influences one's behaviour and attitudes (Krahé, 1992). Experiences then go to make up someone's self-schema which then effect interpersonal relationships and processes around identification with social groups.

The point I make is that we are all influenced by early life experiences and these for some people overshadow their day-to-day living and influence their perceptions at both a subconscious or conscious level. These may impact on the psychological act of ostracism both as a perpetrator or victim and cause negative feelings to both parties. Before I discuss ostracism, I present discussion around people's psychology as suggested by the tone and description of adverse events arising for the misfits which lead me deeper into what might be going on psychologically for the discussants.

5.2.8.6.2 Diathesis-Stress Model - ostracism

The narratives of people’s painful experiences in social interactions past and present are suggestive of a personality component to perceptions to misfit. The situations described are within a family, social, school and work set up, but the experience of misfit is the same despite the different actors, time frame and environment, suggesting that it is the persons themselves that are the reason for the psychology of misfit, presented as the perception of anxious solitude and peer exclusion, which links into a diathesis-stress model of internalising trajectories in childhood.
I remember feeling trapped in this position in high school. The "in crowd" seemed to really be having a fabulous time. I watched from the periphery wondering what was wrong with me that I didn't authentically want to be doing what they were doing and why didn't it matter to them whether I was part of the group or not. I wanted the fun they were having, but I knew that I would have to fake it to be a part of the group and I wasn't good at that. I wanted them to want me. I knew that forcing or inserting myself into their activities wouldn't accomplish that.

Feelings of not fitting in, not being chosen and just not belonging anywhere dominated my experiences in high school.

As life marched on, I noticed myself experiencing the outsider phenomenon repeatedly.

I've lost time the amount of times i've gone into the canteen to get my lunch to discover everyone else has went out for lunch without inviting me.

And there is a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy to it

You could call it bullying but it's not what I'm concerned about as I've been bullied much worse many times in the past,

I’m guessing it's all in my head though due to its rather rapid and unexpected development. Do you think it's my brain just telling to move on with my life and leave my past behind (I have been after all
It is possible that there might be particular ‘personality traits or dispositions’ that some people hold that make them temperamentally unsuited to fitting in because of a physiological predisposition, say a high level of neurosis and anxiety (Prasko et al., 2010). Furthermore, as suggested by the diathesis-stress literature and model (Gazelle & Ladd, 2014; Hilsman & Garber, 1995) it proposes that people have different innate levels of sensitivities to life events and the depression that can arise from them, exacerbated by “poor social self-efficacy, and dysfunctional beliefs about self” (De Castella et al., 2015:129). According to the Diathesis-Stress model (Zubin & Spring, 1977), two sets of factors interact to create a mental disorder. The first set of factors (the diathesis) is a predisposition or a risk for the disorder. The second set of factors (the stress) triggers the predisposition and creates the disorder. So, someone might possess lots of predispositions or risk factors for a particular disorder but never have them triggered and thereby live a disorder-free life. Alternatively, someone might have a predisposition and be unlucky that they happen upon the only circumstance that ignites it (Billsberry, 2008). Acts of ostracism are created by people and the next category demonstrates, from the data how this is manifest for the discussants with my data.

5.2.9 Category 9 – Core - Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues

There were 315 references to misfit or fit linked to culture or socialisation issues which relate to the first research question: what are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit? The respondents’ discussions on office culture ranged from people posting narratives of their own (negative)
experiences and asking for advice, to people offering advice based on their personal experience or assessment of the situation as presented. From the latter group, their posted job descriptions range through Paralegals, MNC Senior Managers and Project Managers across several different business functions, Change Leaders and Educators, Management Consultants, Intelligence Officers, Chartered Managers and Organisational Development specialists to name but a few. Their postings came either from personal experience of feeling like a misfit, as to what to do with people who behave as misfits within the culture of the organisation, or what they would do if this were one of their team or employee.

The culture from the point of view expressed by the many respondents to the theme is presented as an implicit set of common behaviours and attitudes to which newcomers are expected to conform. No specific definition of culture was offered but the importance of being part of it came through the commentary of those who posted. The culture was talked about as the behaviour of the group, the ‘norm’. That norm could be toxic, weird, stagnant, cliquey, formal, social, in and out of work, dysfunctional, led by the CEO, not liking or being accepting of outsiders. According to the posters if you fit in, then there will be reciprocity and goodwill, happiness, likelihood of keeping one's job. The viewpoints about misfit with the office culture had the same message, if you misfit, then get out of that place because “... don't stand out! Agree with your manager on everything and remember if it's different it is to be feared”. The respondents opined that misfit means that a person won’t be accepted, reinforced by the view that “that almost never do people change their stripes to fit in where they don't belong in the first place”, HRM driven socialisation and onboarding procedures notwithstanding. These messages resonate with the similarity of causes of misfit coming from the
organisations’ culture and policies as demonstrated in the empirical study of Talbot & Billsberry (2007) where 61% of the reasons of misfit related to culture or managerial action or inaction.

The type of culture varies within an organisation from functional area to functional area, for example, an R&D department that needs to foster creativity and Blue-Sky thinking is likely to have a different culture to that of the accounts department where preciseness and proof of process and outputs through an audit trail is necessary. Each department or workgroup/team attracting and employing people with same or similar personalities to the culture there. For this particular work, and following the writings of (Schein, (1986) who looks at the culture at ‘deeper cognitive layers’ and (Denison, 1997; O’Reilly & Chatman, 1996). I take culture to mean, a system of shared values as created, developed or learnt in responses to how to cope with problems (that define what is important) and norms that define appropriate perception, attitudes and behaviours for organisational members (how to feel and behave); and taught to new members. In the words of (Schneider et al., 2013) as linked the ASA model on which this thesis is based, culture is: “Organizational culture is briefly defined as the basic assumptions about the world and the values that guide life in organizations “page 361. It is taken here as a social control system as based on shared norms and values that characterise the groups, teams or department (O’Reilly & Chatman, 1996).

I posit that is the organisational culture, particularly at a sub-level within a department or group that is the most significant external influence here in this data set as to why people feel like they misfit. Stop ‘blaming’ the individual, and looking for their inadequacies at a singular level as the reason that they misfit.
Organisational culture is a social control system and one that is made up of shared meaning and is thus a strong factor that shapes individuals’ behaviour, and thoughts and perceptions underpin that (Chuang, Church, & Zikic, 2004; O’Reilly, 1989; O’Reilly et al., 1991). Discussion of the key aspects arising from the data under the category 9 Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues is carried out to explore the power of culture over an individual and concerning the third key finding coming from initial data analysis in chapter 4.

Categories 7 and 8 were merged as they are cross influential, in that the feelings expressed from the category 7 ‘Strong feelings over sense of misfit’ are very much connected to the power of group dynamics which are examined in category 8 as ‘Outsider position - group influence. That left two categories, 8 and 9 going towards theory construction because of the size of the comments within which total 505 (70%) postings out of a total for the nine categories of 726.

Leading towards an answer to research question 3 I also examined the data for an understanding of how misfits cope with their affective state

5.2.9.1 Coping behaviours

“Christoph III - just hang in there. Try not to let it bother you”. Sometimes when a person's self-esteem and confidence is very low it is very easy to start feeling that the whole universe is against you….. so if you learn to like and love yourself for who you are people will respond likewise.

As already shown in Chapter 4, the behaviours expressed in relation to coping with misfit range from keeping feelings internalised to being explicit in conduct or attitude by example showing one's boredom and stress for the
unfortunate situation that people perceive they have been put within. The coping behaviours described appear to be an expression of negative feelings and emotions, coming about as possibly a) work-based affect acting as an input (attitudes and behaviour brought into an interaction) or, b) as an output in the form of unpleasant work effects on a person such as negative experiences for example as anger, hostility, anxiety and unhappiness (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). These are, as Yu (2009:1211) poses “fed back into the PE fit process…. Which is a dynamic process” and which Yu argues represents a gap in fit knowledge. Similarly, in respect of the misfit construct, there is a lack of understanding of the process and we need to know what people bring into what transpires to be a misfit exchange and/or perception of such because that gives us an idea of a nomological misfit construct rather than looking at it in the same way as fit has been done to date, with definable individual level and unidirectional antecedents (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). The coping behaviours go towards answering research question 3 and will be discussed in context of the following model and in key findings and contributions within chapter 6.

5.3 Model of misfit cognition and affective processes

The data have been analysed and relevant literatures have been used to deepen understanding of the themes that emerged through the grounded theory method applied. I now present the findings in the form of a model depicting the multi-directional influences to a misfit’s cognisant processes that result in their perceptions of affective misfit. I have constructed this model under the influence of Yu (2009) and his model 'A Motivational Model of PE Fit', not by its content, but the way he sought to depict, at a high level, the influences towards PE fit. I have taken this approach one step further by using as a basis for my model the
data from the coding categories to depict a process of psychological misfit, perceived or otherwise, and the multidirectional of internal (the person P) and external environment (that includes the organisational E) influences. This goes towards a better understanding of what drives misfit through knowing how and why individual actions or inactions within a corporate context impact on subjective experiences of misfit, underpinned by what a group of people who declare themselves as misfitting at work have said about the process and how they cope.

In the systematic approach of a Grounded Theory Methodology, theory is generated from a core category. In this study there are two, *Category 8 – Core – Outsider position* and *Category 9 – Core Misfit or fit as connected to culture or socialisation issues*. All the other (lower) categories fed into these two capstone ones and they underpin the construction of the model at 5.3 Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes (together with a readable version) starting with presentation of what people have said are precursors to them perceiving that they are misfits

*Table 18 Antecedents to Misfit (expressed in the data)*

![Figure 6 Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes](image)
REPLACE PAGE WITH VISIO
FOLD OUT MODEL
I also present a top-level view (see Figure 7 Mapping of research questions and findings to the Model of Cognition and Affective Processes) where from the research questions have been answered and new findings and contributions presented. See next page
## Figure 7 Mapping of research questions and findings to the Model of Cognition and Affective Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding category</th>
<th>Model section</th>
<th>Research question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 2 - Misfit over time or trigger event</td>
<td>1) Antecedents to perceived misfit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3 - HR or management ineffective</td>
<td>1) Antecedents to perceived misfit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 4 - Misfit or fit connected to demographics</td>
<td>1) Antecedents to perceived misfit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 8 – Core - Outsider position – group influence</td>
<td>3) External influence from caring referent others and 4) External influence 1 - departmental culture and 2 - referent others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 9 – Core - Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues</td>
<td>3) External influence from caring referent others and 4) External influence 1 - departmental culture and 2 - referent others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 8 – Core - Outsider position – group influence</td>
<td>3) External influence from caring referent others and 4) External influence 1 - departmental culture and 2 - referent others</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 8 – Core - Outsider position – group influence</td>
<td>6) Reframe to fit?, Psychological consequences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 1 - Outcomes of misfit feelings</td>
<td>8) End result behaviour</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2 - Misfit over time or trigger event</td>
<td>8) End result behaviour, 4) External influence 1 - departmental culture and 2 - referent others</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 5 - The need to fit in to keep job</td>
<td>8) End result behaviour</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 6 - Misfit seen in a positive light</td>
<td>7) New mental state arrival</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Emerging new findings

**Finding 1 and contribution - Feelings of misfit are akin to an emotional, social death that come about as a result of a threat to an important psychological need triggered by interactions within the organisation.**

|                                                                 | 1) Antecedents to perceived misfit , 2) Misfit subconscious cognition process, 3) External influence from caring referent others, 4) External influence 1 - departmental culture and 2 - referent others and 5) Internal influencers | 1                 |

**Finding 2 and contribution - Misfit is an automatic felt deep emotion brought on by a connection to a past experience or belief and transcends objective rationale.**

|                                                                 | 2) Misfit subconscious cognition process instantaneous internal responses and 5) Internal influencers | 1                 |

**Finding 3 and contribution - Misfit can be rationalised or amplified (cognitive interpretation) within the context of internal and external influencers**

|                                                                 | 3) External influence from caring referent others and 4) External influence 1 - departmental culture and 2 - referent others | 3                 |

---

### Summary

1. What are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit?
2. What are the consequences to self and perhaps others of feeling like a misfit?
3. How do employees manage their feelings or position of misfit?
5.3.1 Antecedents

The first objective of this thesis was to answer the question, ‘what are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit?’ To do so I examined the data for contributions attributable to the person ‘P’ and/or the organisational environment ‘E’, and these I reorganised from the data in the form of keywords and presented at *Table 18 Antecedents to Misfit (expressed in the data)*

There is no definitive list that can be drawn up. For example, in the table broad attributes to a person were “lack of confidence, difficulty in communicating, difficulties with getting on with different personality types, shy and socially anxious, low self-esteem”, with organisational characteristics being as cited by a discussant “a cliquey organisational culture in dept., don't like change or new people, depressing people, broken relationship with a supervisor”. There are only a few features that I can identify as resting solely with either the person or the organisation in this dynamic person-environment because of the very nature of reciprocal interactions that take place and their unknown effect upon each other. For that reason, broad antecedents to misfit are depicted inside a Venn diagram within *a Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes* to show overlaps and reciprocity between the P and E which give rise to the outcomes. *Figure 8 Start of the misfit process - triggers* is shown here as an extract from the whole model.
I now go on to explain each of the stages that the data suggest are involved in someone’s cognitive processes around misfit.

5.3.2 Misfit subconscious cognition process

My representation of the misfit subconscious cognition process I pose is an input to answering the second research question: what are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit? From what is known in the extant literature, a sense of organisational misfit comes about as result of interaction with people in a work situation, and that it is a multi-dimensional affair (Caldwell...
As already stated, the behaviour and thinking of one person are influenced by, and at the same time affects the behaviour and thinking of another person. The effect of others' behaviours upon an individual's reflection around misfit is borne out by this study’s data.

Once an event or interaction occurs, there is at speed triggered within an individual a stimulus (see Figure 9 Misfit subconscious cognition processes – instantaneous internal responses at a subconscious level). The stimulus prompts an instantaneous internal response in the form of feeling (and reacting), known as ‘Affective Primacy’ (Zajonc, Fazio, & Petty, 2008; Zajonc, 1985). This principle is a subject expounded upon by Yu (2009) in the context of PE fit when talking about the effect that attitude, moods and emotions experienced at work have upon that causal relationship. They don't always have to be consciously recognised because affective experience, depending on the sensory input can precede cognition, and along with that is evidence (ibid) (Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer, 2000) that says that people tend to selectively remember their emotional reactions even when there is no conscious memory of the reasons underlying their feelings.

Feelings and raw emotions present as what is colloquially called an instant ‘gut reaction’ so that “information relevant for effective responses can be activated quickly and automatically, before information about ontological kinds” (Lai, Hagoort, & Casasanto, 2012:1). Because, in the case of misfits it appears that ‘feelings cause thoughts’, one doesn’t think through becoming a misfit, it starts off with some painful feelings and is immediate in its emotional response (James & Nahl, 1999).
In the case of a misfit perception, my data analysis shows that the response is a negative one because of the psychologically underlying feelings that impinge upon such emotions as belongingness, and/or self-esteem, identity and the ultimately, the fear of ostracism. This state would, I posit, precede Cognitive Primacy where the possible misfit moves towards thinking through all aspects of the stimulus before they evaluate its affective content and either sustain or dilute the original feeling from the interaction (Murphy & Zajonc, 1993). In the diagram, the next step is around Cognitive Primacy.
The next stage of cognitive processing is, from what discussants have posted that they think through the stimuli and its elements before they evaluate its affective content and their response, in a stage called Cognitive Primacy (Yu, 2009). The thinking processes described by the people in this study suggest that a perception of misfit is also influenced by the negativity of emotions coming from past similar occurrences, often from social or family interactions, and that these are transferred onto the current situation. Evidence of this process has been shown through many postings from people who are experiencing a sense of misfit at work, reminiscent of previous life experiences, or the particular work situation they say is a replay of what has already happened, sometimes time and time again. They have posted, that at times, past experiences have affected their current interactions and they can’t stop themselves in their negative feelings, or that they can’t deal with them, thus why the call for help and advice to the fora. This process of psychodynamic transference is where (past) unconscious conflicts with people or situations and the feelings from them are transferred on to a person or situation in the present.

“Whenever a person perceives something, in order to recognise it, he/she needs to compare the present perception with past experience. Memories, especially pictorial and emotionally laden ones, can be triggered by something in the present which evokes the past and the person will react in a similar way as they did then” (Prasko et al., 2010:189).

Further, the process being replayed in one's head supports a form of limiting cognitive dissonance that gives rise to reactions, thoughts attitudes and behaviours not necessarily in keeping with the reality of what is going on. It appears here that a person's unconscious conflicts can cause problems in everyday
life and therefore acts as a very influential moderating variable that influences several aspects as shown in the conceptual model presented. To temper the strong and maybe misguided influence of these old feelings coming back to overshadow a current situation, some people ask for help through internet fora, seeking advice on how best to deal with their psychological and emotional state.

5.3.3 External input from caring referent others

The impact and advice from people that the discussants appeal to, that is, external advice from caring referent others (see Figure 10 External influencers) inputs to my second research question: What are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit? These external influencers such as colleagues, friends, relatives, and spouses, allows people who perceive themselves to misfit to look at the interaction from a different perspective, to help reframe feelings into the more comfortable state of fit or to check that their misfit perceptions are accurate or reasonable. (Cirulli, Borgi, Berry, Francia, & Alleva, 2011). Empirical research by Van Vianen, Pater, & Dijk (2007:196) argues that co-workers are used as referent others to discuss a person’s sense of fit and that “group level perceptions indeed affected employees’ attitudes”. They may help in a perfectly conventional way in assisting the person who thinks that they misfit to look at things differently, taking account of fundamental attribution error (FAE), also known as correspondence bias. FAE is the tendency for people to place undue emphasis on the internal aspects of a person or persons' contribution to an interaction without considering that there might also be an external factor that may have had an influence (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011; O’Reilly & Chatman, 1996), but it is either not known about or not acknowledged. As friends and colleagues, we are used to discussing emotional upsets with children or friends –
encouraging the upset person to look outside of their painful life experience to see whether there are any other factors in play. Such reflection may give rise to the misfit reframing their perceptions into a sense of fit.

5.3.4 External influences 1 – departmental culture and 2 – referent others

Within the box for referent others (2) (see Figure 10 External influencers) are also included those people who have power and control within the organisation such as management and the HR personnel. All the time the individual is checking out their everyday subjective sense of what they see as fit or misfit. The reciprocal influences from these two entities are shown as external influencers. However, this appears to happen once the misfit perceptions are created within the person’s cognition process which have in part been shaped by internal psychological predilections as influencers.

5.3.5 Internal influencers

For the internal influencers I identified five inputs, that is, the importance people put upon their senses of:

1. Fit to the group
2. Belongingness

3. Social inclusion and identity through desired group membership for


5. Fear of ostracism

They are inputs to my second research question: what are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit? These have been previously discussed in the earlier part of this chapter 5.2.8 (see Figure 11 Internal influencers).

The person cognitively appraises the situation taking into account all inputs, to arrive at one of three states (see Figure 12 New mental state arrival) 1) to reframe negative thoughts into positive ones around a reappraised position of fit from influencers rather than misfit; 2) a felt state of misfit, a social death as a new experience or 3) at stage three, the most psychologically damaging of all as one that repeats previous experiences and the emotional pain that went with it. These
three steps are shown in separate parallel boxes in the figure because only one of
them would apply. That new mental state arrival then goes on to influence
continuing thoughts, perceptions and resulting behaviours and attitudes (Clore &
Hutsinger, 2007).

5.3.6 Psychological consequences

The psychological consequences inputs to my second research question:
what are the consequences to self and perhaps others of feeling like a misfit?
Once the cognitive state of misfit is arrived at, negative consequences some quite
severe, ensue for the individual as they try to work through and out of the felt
state of misfit. As happened with the inputs to misfit there are no clear, definable
outputs that can be allocated definitively against the individual or the
organisation. Examples of comments include features such as depression,
frustration, mistreatment, feels bullied by employer to conform, ostracised,
physically ill, no one to talk to, never "one of the gang", feels targeted, gets an intuitive feeling of uneasiness, overlooked for promotion - cannot always be laid at the door of the individual or the organisation because they are likely to be reciprocal relations. Organisations are made up of people – hence why the outcomes reported through the data are represented through a Venn diagram (see Figure 13 Psychological consequences) to illustrate the linkages and interpersonal trauma as psychological consequences.
The second stage cognisance and feelings form the basis of the final part of the diagram which inputs to the third research question: how do employees manage their feelings or position of misfit? *Table 20 How to cope with Misfit shows* what happens because of the consequences of feeling like a misfit, that is, the action or inaction that is taken by the person perceiving a sense of misfit. A feeling of misfit is a negative emotion, and reflects words such as, for example,
anger, hostility, anxiety and unhappiness which naturally leads to avoidance or escape reactions (Baka, 2015; Krahe, 1992). For someone who has moved into, or continues with, a misfit psychological state they are likely to do only one of two things: To leave the organisation (Schneider 1987) depending on their level of continuance commitment, or to stay and cope. To go might be through finding a new job voluntarily, or to be forced to leave. To remain, includes the internalisation of feelings, to hide psychological distress by entering into a survival mode. A person does through the medium of coping behaviours which itself has several dimensions, including deviant workplace behaviours which are not always intentional (Fox & Spector, 1999) and has been discussed within the context of the most influential influence within the model, that of organisational culture at departmental level. The psychological distress (red) that comes as a result of this end state cogniscent framing is very painful and provided only three options to the person:

1. stay, cope, put up a façade of fitting in under the support of coping behaviours
2. reframe thoughts into positive ones such as being a ‘socially acceptable’ maverick who is just eccentric, but has excellent qualities, and to stay with the organisation, or
3. find another job and exit the organisation.
For coping behaviours Figure 14 Options to misfit, this involves actions such as job crafting that involve making changes at work and to the job that are mostly hidden from management and run counter to management desires and expectations to satisfy employees own purpose (Lyons, 2008; Vogel, Rodell, & Lynch, 2016), or finding a niche at work in which to hide away (Van Vianen & Stoelhorst, 2007a)

I am sick of feeling this way, and I mostly hold it inside and let it fester away at me, so here goes.
I resort to things that make me happy, making really obnoxious jokes - puns, word play, random odd associations of things I make in my head, fidgeting with things at the desk because I am not happy with my surroundings

Have to stick it out until a new job comes up

I spent 5 years working for shit money at a company I hated, but they trained me heaps. I was able to use that time and training to change my career direction and get into something I enjoyed more and that paid better.

If I stick this out for one more year, can I use the qualification to help me move into another field that I might enjoy more?

Try to do a really good job, and remain “above” petty bickering and office politics

Adapt to the office culture to survive

The new knowledge presented here about what misfits do goes towards challenging the attrition stage of Schneider’s (1987) ASA model in which he suggests that “if people do not fit they leave”. According to the data in this study, they do not appear to do so, they stay and suffer with the perception that their misfit is a failure of socialisation, adjustment, and association, which it is not necessarily their fault, although they may think and feel that it is. That position does not, however, ameliorate the pain of their raw emotions. For a very few people (5%) they seek to label their misfit into something positive, somewhat in the way that a maverick is viewed as captured in Category 6 - Misfit seen in a
positive light for the misfit person to restore/garnersome form of value to who they are and what they do (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010; Voelpel, Leibold, & Tekie, 2006). For what can be termed ‘the lucky few’, they leave to find elsewhere or for the ‘unlucky few ’they are forced out:

Even though we all knew it was a matter of time, we all stayed out of fear, only to be let go eventually.

The working through each part of a person’s mental construct towards a perception of misfit has enabled me to produce an end to end Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes as well as construct contributions outside of the initial research questions and to put forward a definition of misfit.

5.3.7 Findings

Earlier, when discussing fit, I cited Lewin (1935:73) and his interactionist psychology claim that behaviour was the function of the interaction between person and the environment, B = f (P, E). This study supports his view that “from a certain total constellation comprising a situation and an individual - there results in certain behaviour”. Moreover, my research has not only examined the ‘constellation' it has done so for the interactions coming from the aggregate of the P and the E through looking at cognitive processes as well. This has given rise to three findings which I present below, and are further discussed within chapter 6 at section 6.3 Key findings and contributions

1. Feelings of misfit are akin to an emotional, social death that comes about as a result of a threat to an important psychological need triggered by interactions within the organisation

2. Misfit is an automatic felt deep emotion brought on by a connection
to a past experience or belief and transcends objective rationale

3. Misfit can be rationalised or amplified (cognitive interpretation) within the context of internal and external influencers

I take from results 1 and 2 a sense of what brings about the perceived state of misfit and from 3 what could be done to amend that state, for which I proffer a misfit definition.

5.3.7.1 Definition of organisational misfit

---

Misfit is a negative psychological state akin to social death which comes about as a result of a perceived threat to self-worth and identity triggered by interactions or lack of interactions with workgroups and influenced by the pain of previous psychological events which may be ameliorated with input from referent others

---

The most recent definition of misfit comes from the work of Cooper-Thomas & Wright, (2013:24) who explored misfit in the context of co-worker interactions and the quality and presence of social relations with them in the workplace. From their analysis they define misfit as:

Person-environment misfit refers to a perceived mismatch between the individual and the environment, on a dimension that is salient to one or both parties, and relates to individual factors that are more than, less than, or qualitatively different from the comparable factors at the organization level.
I suggest that my definition supplements that of Cooper-Thomas & Wright (2013) by providing knowledge around the presence, or absence of a ‘trigger’ around the perceived mismatch to which they refer. Though in my study this is showing as mainly coming from the act of ostracism from co-workers to an individual in the organisational environment and is one sided, not as they say “on a dimension that is salient to one or both parties”.

In addition, for contributions, from the model in sections 5.3 maps and depicts the deep sense of emotional and psychological pain that people suffer as a result of their sense of misfit, inputs that bring about that state, as well as how that state ‘can be ameliorated with input from referent others’. The model also includes the help misfits seek to reframe the power and pain of the internal psychological influencers (to develop a metaphorical ‘thick skin’), as well as listening to or being counselled by people within the organisation such as managers and HR personnel who are interested in the positive emotional and mental wellbeing of the person.

5.4 Relevance to the PE fit literature

Following on from calls from PE fit researchers, (e.g.Billsberry, 2008; Wheeler, Coleman-Gallagher, Brouer, & Sablynski, 2007) this study explores misfit in-depth from a personal, psychological perspective rather than making an assumption that it is a ‘state’ that is the opposite to, or a lack of PE fit. My study suggests, through the Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes that the construct of misfit is a complex process and very much cognitively based. Moreover, the narratives come from a subset of misfits who are expressing ‘voice’ on internet fora who say that they desperately want to fit in, this is feature
that appears to have not been previously assumed or explored in the fit literature. According to the data in this study, misfit for this sub-set of people who have expressed voice, is a state of mental and emotional distress brought on, initially, by poor quality interactions with people within the workplace, with co-workers in a social context as identified by Cooper-Thomas & Wright, (2013). The distress is further influenced by memories of adverse life experiences being brought into thought processes on top of unknown biological or psychological bases as depicted through my discussion around a Diathesis-Stress Model (discussed in section 5.2.8.6.2).

Literature which reflects on fit or misfit coming from one or more person and organisational aspects include Jansen and Kristof-Brown’s (2006) multi-dimensional model, further, their 2007 spillover/spiralling model argument puts forward that people do not interact with one just dimension of the environment (PJ, PO, PV, PP) at any one time, they do so across multiple levels simultaneously. Indeed, the literature says that we do not know what dimensions people consider as important to them in a situation, although the study by Edwards and Billsberry’s (2010) on what people perceived as most important to their fit, was relationships with co-workers. This study suggests that what individuals consider important is where a deep psychological need is triggered. However, Jansen and Kristof-Brown suggest that where there is fit in one dimension and not in another, then through a process of spillover the positive outcomes are spread about to even things out and achieve fit by reducing/negating misfit wherever possible.
According to Follmer et al., (2016) whose research drew on personal interviews with people who were experiencing misfit, there are four possible ways in which people try to resolve their feelings of misfit or reduce its effects:

1. leaving or actively trying to leave;
2. working to resolve misfit by changing the self or environment;
3. buffering misfit with fit; and
4. living with or accepting misfit.

The first three outcomes of that study cohere with what we already know from the fit literature. Leaving (Schneider, 1987, 1995), changing self or environment (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Roberts & Robins, 2004; Van Vianen & Stoelhorst, 2007a), and buffering through embeddedness (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001). The first action, leaving or actively trying to leave is replicated in my data, but I used the words people presented to give a description of their ‘voluntary or forced exit'. The behaviours as listed above 2 – 4 inclusive are reflected in my data but more in the context of coping behaviours, to support ‘living with or accepting misfit'. My study also offers evidence that people who still feel like a misfit will do their best to carry on, though not necessarily in a positive way, which is about changing self or the environment around one’s self.

“I resort to things that make me happy, making really obnoxious jokes - puns, word play, random odd associations of things I make in my head, fidgeting with things at the desk because I am not happy with my surroundings
“I think the beauty of being a misfit lies in the fact that despite being different, u somehow manage to fit! even if it means having to create your own zone or doing your own thing which then sets a trend

There is no spillover at work indicated by the discussants in my study. The only indication that people have sought to reduce their feelings of misfit is by compartmentalising in their heads their time at work, getting through the day and connecting with people socially and at home to keep a sense of self and fit. Interestingly, the second part of the spillover/spiralling construct (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007) which says that through a (cognitive) process of mutual reinforcement, feelings of fit generate further feelings of fit an argument they say works as well with feelings around a sense of lack of fit. This seems to be the case in my study that once discussants are fixed in their minds about their sense of misfit, it is a ‘downwards spiral' with the only option available to them of organisational exit (Schneider, 1987) or to stay and cope. However, there is no evidence in this study of misfits staying and “acting as centres of rebellion, disaffection and malcontent” (Billsberry 2005:12). People in this study stayed and they might have misbehaved such as “making obnoxious jokes”, but there is no substantial evidence of deviant work behaviours. The dimension of person-group (PG) fit has been found to be salient and is discussed in depth both within the literature review and the additional literature review (see section 5.2.8.2). It was noted that Cable & Edwards, (2004:823) drawing on the work of Endler & Magnusson, (1976) and French et al., (1982) said that:

“people look to their position of needs and supplies available in the environment, that is their psychological need fulfilment, and when
those supplies fall short then misfit occurs and people will become dissatisfied”.

This statement coheres with what has come out of this study, that people look to workgroups/teams within the organisation to satisfy or at least not wreck their psychological needs of belongingness, self-esteem and social identity through group/organisational membership. Ostracism is frequently cited as pushing people outside of the group. The PE Fit literature, particularly the work of Edwards, (1998, 2008) says that feelings of misfit manifest as stress. Also Caplan, Cobb, French, (1975), Edwards & Shipp, (2007) and Fevre et al., (2003) link misfit to psychological strain and frustration, nervous breakdown, promotion side-lining, no career fulfilment and job loss (Billsberry & Talbot, 2010; Talbot & Billsberry, 2008).

“The organizations in which people work affect their thoughts, feelings, and actions in the workplace and away from it. Likewise, people’s thoughts, feelings, and actions affect the organizations in which they work." (Brief & Weiss, 2002:279)

5.5 Summary and conclusions

A person’s sense of misfit depends on an individual’s perception of the person to person interaction that they encounter, that is, social interactions (Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013). Additionally, as highlighted by Kristof-Brown & Guay (2010) and Schneider, (2010) ‘fit’ or lack of fit is not just about the P for person and E for the general work environment, but it is about how the constellation of dimensions work together to influence thoughts and bring about certain outcomes. Misfit thoughts or perceptions may already be a predisposition within a person’s mental makeup, to lean towards a low psychological state,
along with high levels of existential anxiety that also link to past life events. It is possible that somebody might function well at work until a misfit process starts that is previously unknown or unexperienced, rather as a one-off event. In both instances, people may well have coped well until an interaction occurs that triggers unpleasant feelings around a sense of misfit, an adverse psychological event. Maybe the external influence of supervisors, co-workers, advice from internet fora, friends and family might ameliorate the perception of misfit, but not always. That leaves the person with, as they have explained in their blogs, 1) indulging in coping behaviours within the organisation, 2) reframing to a maverick position or 3) exiting the organisation. The concluding chapter presents my answers to the three research questions, key findings and contributions, strengths and limitations, implications for practice and suggestions for future research.
Chapter 6 - Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

I started this study to find out about what makes up the construct of affective organisational misfit, to understand what the experience was like, what caused it and what were the consequences of feeling as if one misfitted within an organisational environment. Initial research into the concept of misfit suggested that feeling as if one does not fit in has deleterious psychological and physiological effects upon the person and the organisational context (Billsberry, 2008). From the fora discussants in my study this appears to be so as they relate the raw and painful experiences of misfitting at work. They are aggrieved and are calling out for help. I have found some possible answers to contribute to fit literature as well as some contributions emerging from the data as is the objective of grounded theory methodology.

The reason behind my research is that little is known beyond anecdotal knowledge about what it is to feel like a person who doesn't fit in on a psychological level and to be labelled a ‘misfit' at work. For the business, the PE fit literature proposes that misfit will lead to reduced productivity which more than likely occurs because of employees’ counterproductive work behaviours coming from negative emotions (Baka, 2015). These range through absence, presenteeism, withdrawal or turnover (Gilbody, Bower, & Rick, 2012) and is thus necessary to address in organisational terms because of resultant financial costs and reduced profitability. On an employee level, extant fit research shows that people do want to fit in, to be accepted, to be included as a part of a group (even if working alone or remotely). According to the literature, people will make every
effort to establish and improve their fit and lessen their sense of misfit and this is borne out by what discussants have said.

Despite misfit being a central theme in Person-Environment (PE) fit, little is known about what it is (Billsberry & Talbot, 2010; Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013; Williamson, 2013; Follmer et al., in press). Theoretically, so far, misfit has only been posed as a state in which people don’t fit within an organisation and its values.

Through netnographic methods, I have collected data from a thought-provoking set of self-declared organisational misfits who are expressing ‘voice’: people who are articulating the emotional and psychological pain of their sense of misfit at work, which they perceive as ostracism from a workgroup or team and at times, a replay of what has happened to them before. Their pleas for inclusion and acceptance, not listened to at work, are expressed, in real time, to internet discussion fora for help in order to connect with someone who understands their distress, and who may respond with kind words and coping advice. In this study, therefore, I have been able to examine the complex and personal experience of the misfit often as an interaction unfolds. This has permitted the identification of antecedents (trigger events or exchanges) to the circumstance to answer research question 1, then to find out what they were feeling and experiencing and, to explore the consequences to self and perhaps others, to answer research question 2. Additionally, and in answer to research question 3, the study sought to find out how a person feeling like a misfit copes, so that the knowledge is of use to the person-environment (PE) fit discipline as well as to management practitioners who are able to facilitate positive workplace change.
In the concluding section of chapter 5, I put forward a definition of the term to add to the newly emerging body of misfit knowledge. Additionally, the analysis showed that there is likely to be more than one type of misfit. This study sample, of a subset of people who have expressed voice, shows up two. The first are people who aren't misfits but more of a romanticised maverick Category 6 - *Misfit seen in a positive light*. The others are people who want to fit, but despite their best efforts to do so, they find, through the actions or inactions of others, they realise or perceive themselves to be ostracised, so slipping into a state of misfit. I call this second group ‘social misfits’.

To answer the research questions and to present new knowledge about misfit as located in the discipline of person-environment (PE) fit, I adopted a constructivist grounded theory methodology (GTM). Starting with pilot interviews from people who were prepared to talk about their misfit, I put together phrases that described the psychological state, ready for a further call for misfits. However, it was challenging to locate misfits because they were seemingly unwilling to expose themselves because they fear for their corporate existence (Shallenberger, 1994). Also, as Van Vianen & Stoelhorst (2007) argue, where people find that they misfit to the environment they will seek to change it, or find a niche within which to disappear. Consequently, misfits are elusive and difficult to study, so, I used the internet to locate where people were using the benefit of anonymity to express their misfit feelings, the reasons for which I discussed in my methodology chapter.

Using words from the previous, pilot interviews I built search strings to seek out misfits from public discussion fora, in which people were posting their views and seeking advice around their emotionally painful misfit experiences.
These were often in real time, that is, ‘in the moment’ and uninfluenced by researcher questions. Guided by my adopted GTM, I examined the explicit statements as well as implicit meanings to see what brought about the psychological state of misfit and; interestingly for the field of fit, the aspect and importance of influences and replay of previous life interactions and their impact on the present state. Through analysis, I have identified the thoughts and emotions that misfit generated, the aetiology of misfit, the effect and consequences of misfit, and the pathological progression of misfit, all of which opens up the opportunity for new directions into the study of misfit by presenting a comprehensive qualitative investigation and conceptual model which supports both future qualitative and quantitative research. I commence this chapter with answers to the three research questions to satisfy this study’s objectives as set out in chapter 1, through linkages to the model of misfit cognition and affective processes I proceed with presentation and discussion of key findings and contributions, strengths and limitations, implications for practice and areas for future research. A final concluding remark ends this chapter.

6.2 Answers to the research questions

In keeping with the grounded theory methodology that is my research paradigm I did not enter the field with very specific, narrow questions to answer as is common in other research designs because, it is through the research process of emergence that questions are generated (Birks & Mills, 2011; Glaser, 1978, 2005). That being said, I started this study to find out what inputs to perceptions of misfit, what happens when a person consciously or subconsciously feels like a misfit and how do they cope and manage their misfit feelings. These are broad questions that reflected an aspect that researchers in the field of PE fit sought to
examine and understand (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Wheeler, 2010c) and enabled me to examine the data from a problem-centred perspective of those experiencing and living as misfits at work; and to develop contributions to the literature based on what emerged. On that basis, from analysis of the data, based on the coding categories that developed, I constructed a model, *Figure 15 Thumbnail Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes*, replicated in small scale below.

![Model of Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes](image)

*Figure 15 Thumbnail Misfit Cognition and Affective Processes*

In the sections that follow, I explain each part of the model as relevant to both the research questions and knowledge emerging as points of theory (presented and discussed within section 5.2.8.1).

6.2.1 RQ1 What are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit?
This question has been answered by input from the coding categories as shown in section 5.2.2 *Category 2 - Misfit over time or trigger event*, which presents these reasons as being for instance, something changing within the organisation, such as a new event or interaction with a new person over which the discussant has little or no control. They no longer mesh with what is going on around them at work. People themselves also change and no longer fit in with a situation that was fine for them at some previous time. There are subtle life changes as well that can lead people to re-defining their life priorities within their work life. The discussants have also alluded to previous and painful life experiences as having been triggered by current interactions, enough to psychologically ‘rubber band’ the person back there. This emotion brings out coping behaviours, ones previously used to shield them from the similarly felt pain, and input into RQ3 How do employees manage their feelings or position of misfit?

There are further coding categories that input into RQ1, such as 5.2.3 *Category 3 - HR or management ineffective*. The commentary was from both employees and managers. For employees, they said that they worked hard, over and above the job specifications. But, what let them down was commentary and role review from managers about the need for them (the employee) to be seen to be part of the team, to socialise more, hang out in after work drink get-togethers, and go to more company events. The discussants didn't want to; they didn't like their work colleagues much, didn't want to be too personal with them, because they had a great time where they had friends outside of work already. A job is a job is a job, but they needed that job, so had to be seen to conform. From managers' perspectives, their views were not about a person being a misfit; it was
about that person just being a ‘bad employee' someone with a ‘bad attitude' that really should have been dismissed and a long time ago. It was managers' inaction that was the problem and that fed into why a person, in the end, feels as if they don't fit in, diversity notwithstanding.

In the world of work where cultural diversity is the norm, it was not unusual to have a coding category that referred to demographics. In 5.2.4 Category 4 - Misfit or fit connected to demographics but people didn't misfit because of race, creed, age or gender, or whether they were tall, thin or fat, it was because at a dyadic level within their workgroup they were in the minority, therefore misfitting. For example, the young man stuck in an office of ‘old’ women in their 50s, or the black girl in an office of men constantly talking about football. They misfit as a noun. If relational demographics were an issue and input to feelings of misfit, then there would have been more than 29 references to it. This cannot be said about Category 8 – Core - Outsider position – group influence which made up 190 of the coded statements, the second largest grouping to input into answering the first research question.

In this category, discussants talked about the emotional pain of not being accepted into a particular workgroup despite many attempts to do so. This perceived ostracism, intended or otherwise, feeds very much into why people feel as if they misfit, that they are a doomed misfit. Opinions of why this was so ranged from the extreme of self-blame, such as a few discussants have said, "it must be me because I am horrible, not worthy, meaningless sort of thing", to the power of the workgroup in ostracising, perceived or otherwise of the person. The stories of the exclusionary acts for some people were a replay of past experiences, not necessarily from an organisational perspective – from school and university
for example - but the pain was intense which fits with the theory, where “even recollections of short-term ostracism can retrigger the original pain associated with the event.... and although ostracism or exclusion may not leave external scars, it can cause pain that often is deeper and lasts longer than a physical injury” (Williams & Nida, 2011:2).

The last and biggest coded category that goes towards answering research question 1: What are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit? is that of Category 9 – Core - Misfit or fit connected to culture or socialisation issues. Office culture was not explicitly explained beyond saying that the expectation was to behave as everyone did no matter how dysfunctional, toxic or weird it appeared to the discussant. The key message was “don’t stand out from the crowd”. The literature, (see section 5.2.8.6 Fear of Ostracism – influencer) says that a way to reduce/negate organisational members’ feelings of misfit are based on: a need for belongingness, social inclusion through desired group membership and support for self-esteem and identity, for no ostracism, and getting a handle on the pain of negative past experiences.

6.2.2 RQ2 What are the consequences to self and perhaps others of feeling like a misfit?

Reports of how people felt about their misfit state came from the two major coding categories Category 8 – Core - Outsider position – group influence and Fear of Ostracism – influencer.

The data took me into reviewing the literature on person-group fit, belongingness, self-esteem and worth, social identity, social death, adult attachment theory, diathesis-stress model and the most important and oft-mentioned state, into which the preceding literature are connected to, is that of
ostracism (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2004; Williams & Nida, 2011). The literature when discussing outcomes mentions the thoughts and feelings cited by discussants as mentioned in Table 19 Consequences of misfit. These seem to refer to the experience of social pain which comes about when people are ostracised, left out of a group and shares stress as a common denominator with the experience of physical injury. They have clear psychological and physiological connections, which link negatively to social stressors and health, and which is not a new area of research (Baum, Lee, & Dougall, 2011; Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004). It is one however that I will argue (in section 6.4 Implications and contributions to practice) needs to be addressed within the workplace.

6.2.3 RQ3 How do employees manage their feelings or position of misfit?

Extant research within social psychology shows that people will go to great lengths to avoid being ostracised, to evade the threat to four fundamental needs: belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence; such is the overarching need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and, as shown in this study, people do not want to be treated as a ‘misfit’, because the pain of exclusion, ostracism is often, as they have said, more than they can bear. People, will adapt and respond, wherever possible, to become part of the dominant group and the way that they do so depends on their cultural background (Williams & Zadro, 2004). From the tone of the statements it seems that the people whose commentary has been captured for this research have already tried ‘highly adaptive responses’ so as to reduce the likelihood of continued ostracism, but those responses have not worked beyond perhaps presenting only a temporary salve to the emotional pain and which at worst can retard learning and personal growth as well as causing
mental and physical illness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2004).

- *I am sick of feeling this way, and I mostly hold it inside and let it fester away at me, so here goes.*

The stories of how people coped with their feelings of misfit within an organisation all related to what they did and how they managed to get by, centring round their actions on how to satisfy their threatened need for inclusion. In the main though the comments on the fora were suggestive of short-term coping mechanisms and there were no ‘in the moment’ narratives of how people were dealing with a long-term sense of misfit, ostracism to a group. Or indeed whether people were self-ostracising themselves in a misguided effort to prevent further rejection at the hands of others (Williams & Nida, 2011)

6.3 Key findings and contributions

I have found two types of misfit, sometimes so identified by the discussants to the Internet fora that I examined. A small proportion, 5%, are mavericks, who talk about their maverickness with a kind of romantic notion of themselves as a misfit (see section 5.2.6 Category 6 – Misfit seen in a positive light), somewhat in the style of the J.K. Rowling and her story of Harry Potter as a wizard in the land of the muggles (ordinary people). Harry may be thought of a misfit in the muggle environment and comfortable in being so, but the people on fora are not of this kind. This 5% have blogged talk about their state of an affective misfit in a romanticised positive way as often happens in the popular press about people who have succeeded in life (Cuban, 2002) or regarded as an ‘enfant terrible’ to glamorise their thoughts and attitudes. They pose themselves as about "thinking
for oneself can be more intriguing and exciting than "following the crowd" (Wilburn Clouse, 1997:1). Their self-given label of misfit influenced perhaps by widespread airport stand business literature which poses that people, usually managers, are in the best position to seek and successfully manage purposeful ‘misfit’ to traditional industry and organisational norms and behaviour, all to develop unique new value, and enable success through innovative ideas and approaches (Voelpel et al., 2006). Often however, these are examples of demands-abilities fit, wherein particular people and strategies are purposefully selected to display what is considered as misfit behaviours, but what makes them different is that they are actively supported, recruited for and encouraged because of their abilities to bring about change, as mavericks. They are not misfits; they fit because they bring needed complementary skills to a business.

Table 22 Maverick statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It certainly goes to affirm my growing position that I'm going to enjoy my life even if it means doing it alone. And I resolve to be more successful, to have a richer life than ANY of them ever will. I intend to take back and keep control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here’s a confession that may surprise no one who regularly reads this blog: I’m a misfit. And I always have been. And having spent a few decades on this planet as a slightly octagonal peg facing an endless vista of square, machine-made holes, I’ve developed a hypothesis about achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s this: great accomplishment usually takes the impertinence not to fit into the suffocating status quo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider the following. Steve Jobs is a misfit — an unashamedly unbuttoned creative in a role usually reserved for the most robotically droid of bean counters. Larry and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sergey are misfits. Shigeru Miyamoto, Gordon Ramsay, Jay-Z, JK Rowling, Indra Nooyi, Arianna Huffington? All slightly off-centre outsiders — all challengers of the status quo, who've never quite fit neatly into its drab, bureaucratically predefined, dumbed-down boxes. Whomever you'd like to add to the list above, of this much I'm virtually certain: they’ll probably be a misfit.

It’s not that every misfit accomplishes something fundamentally unexpectedly awesome (for example, yours truly).

These people are not misfits in the context put forward in this thesis. They are people who at best are mavericks, who think and act freely and different from the norm as demonstrated by narratives (see Table 22 Maverick statements). They appear to see themselves as there in the company to save the world, to ‘think outside of the box, be innovative’ (Doyle, 2002; Vincent, 2005) and are just unjustifiably overlooked, but they will wait it out until discovered and celebrated. They do not relate to the concept of fit or misfit within the field of fit inside of industrial organisational behaviour, of not fitting in with the multi dimensions of PE fit. The remaining respondents do, but not all across the most important fit characteristic, that of a fit of personal values to those of the employing organisational environment (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005) which remains “…one of the best explanations of human behaviour in the workplace…”(Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013: ix).

As already discussed in section 2.4.1 ‘person-organisation (PO) fit’ is taken to be the compatibility between people’s values and those of the entire organisation which also considers the needs supply and demands ability perspectives. So that a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, b) they
share similar fundamental characteristics or e. both. Strong fit is frequently based on the high level of congruence between a person’s values and those of the organisation, a construct first proposed by Chatman, (1989) as being important because of commitment, satisfaction and retention, as well as greater job, good citizenship behaviour and organisational performance that occurs. Yet, in this sample set of people who proclaim themselves as misfits, importantly and extraordinarily, there are only two examples of ‘principle misfit’ because of their value incongruence in the context of PO fit. For the rest of the fora misfit participants, 95% of them are social misfits, people who are ostracised or perceive to be excluded by others within the immediate work group or similar other interactions.

These social misfits are people are misfitting on the interpersonal forms of fit, person to person (PP), person to a supervisor (PS) or person-group (PG). I now go on to recap on the process through which this happens and how the process, through stages, leads to the lowest and painful emotional point, that of social defeat, a perceived and felt state of social death, the consequence of feeling rejected, excluded or ignored and as if they don’t exist as a person (Steele et al., 2014; Timmermans & Sudnow, 1998). This state brings with it paranoid behaviours such as those which lead to paranoid appraisals of social interactions and psychotic disorders, as the person experiences alienation, depression, helplessness and unworthiness (Valmaggia et al., 2015; Williams, 2007; Williams & Nida, 2011). All of the bloggers started in employ wanting to join in and to fit (Van Vianen, Stoelhorst, & De Goede, 2013; Yu, 2013), some manage to do so, and others do not. Somewhere within the induction and socialisation process, something failed, and at some point, the person feels ostracised, isolated, left out
and lonely. That perception then goes on to create a sense of social misfit, in the language of ostracism, that of ‘social death' which I have explained in connection to my data in section 5.2.8.6 *Fear of Ostracism – influencer*. This concept is shared and explained by social psychologists who have a considerable body of literature about the need to avoid being ostracised because to be different is a very high risk to physical and psychological survival. To be in that state is indeed very painful at a psychological level, and as bad as physical pain (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004; Williams & Nida, 2011) and this is demonstrated in my data by frequent statements from the discussants of heart-breaking stories describing interpersonal trauma about being left out or ignored. Added to that is the in-the-moment time frame in which people are talking and asking for help.

The sample in this study is powerful because people are talking and blogging while they are still employed and within the emotional and psychological state of a social misfit. For those people who talk about their misfit in a historical or past tense about previous employment, they mention that the feelings around that sense of misfit were so crushing they left as a solution to that miserable feeling. What is notable from the data, are the painful memories that people relate as they mentally connect a current interaction to one that they say has happened before, that transference event takes the now misfit back to a previous painful life or work experience which they then play out in their head. Seeking out unconsciously to map current events and the types of people involved against the previous negative experience involves self-blame and a loop of negative reinforcement thinking. They take the blame for what is going wrong for them or think that “I couldn't cope before, so I can't cope again – the problem is insurmountable". One of the coping behaviours seems to be withdrawal from the
upsetting scenario which further enforces a sense of ostracism. They face increasing levels of ostracism and if not dealt with successfully, brings about mental and physical illness with an upsurge in sadness and anger (Williams, 2007; Williams & Zadro, 2004), as demonstrated from the data in section 5.3.6 Psychological consequences of the Model of misfit cognition and affective processes at section 5.3

For others, they have to stay and are approaching that state from the perspective of continuance commitment (Meyer, Allen, & Gellatly, 1990), that is, the ability to stay or the ability to leave. In the former position, some people have so much invested in the company such as job skills, time, effort, networking and particular work friendships that they constitute sunk costs which diminishes the attractiveness of employment in another organisation. Either that, where they are junior people, or where more job opportunities are available, they can leave quite effortlessly. These routes confirmed in interviews carried out with managerial and professional people in a study entitled ‘Should I stay or should I go? a qualitative study of the efforts involved in fitting in’ by (Follmer et al., 2016). Additionally, there is the situation that for some there is no employment available elsewhere and that they have to ‘stick it out’ until something else becomes available (Wheeler et al., 2007). It is these people who misfit scholars seek to capture because they have gone into hiding.

For those who can't leave because of no viable alternatives, day to day employment life is very distressing, some people have even blogged from their desks asking for help and some form of communication to keep them going and connected. It looks as if they have sunk to the point of nadir, that of social death and a reduction in self-esteem (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004).
“If no one turned round when we entered, answered when we spoke, or minded what we did, but if every person we met ‘cut us dead,’ and acted as if we were non-existing things, a kind of rage and impotent despair would ere long well up in us, from which the cruelest bodily tortures would be a relief” [emphasis added] (James, 1890/1950:293–294) as cited in Chen, Williams, Fitness, & Newton (2008).

Social death is a phrase used by sociologists to describe the painful psychological outcomes of ostracism, initially coming from studies in hospital settings where people near to death were treated as if they were already dead despite still being biologically and or clinically alive (Bauman, 1992; Králová, 2015; Williams, 2007). Social death is an intense phrase, but the reason that it is so lies behind everyone’s level of existential anxiety and this has been discussed in the context of ostracism in chapter 5 at Fear of Ostracism – influencer. The simple principle that we all have nagging questions in our heads about the meaning of life, what is my purpose here, at worst around what is the point of being here ,(Králová, 2015; Williams, 2007). Social connections keep those thoughts at bay because people are social beings and the innate need to belong is critical to well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). If not addressed then the feelings of ostracism can lead, in the long run, to feelings of alienation, helplessness, and depression (Williams, 2007; Williams & Nida, 2011). However, as already mentioned, people can't always leave to find another job. So, based on the data coming through on this study they stick it out with coping behaviours, seeking to ‘keep themselves sane' in whatever way they can or at best reframing their thoughts and feelings to those of fit or mavericks.
In analysing the data, following the grounded theory methodology I was open to see what the data had to say, and from my discussion at section 6.2 Answers to the research questions knowledge, over and above answers to the initial research questions came out of my analysis; and I present these below as key findings and contributions.

6.3.1 Finding 1 and contribution

Feelings of misfit are akin to an emotional, social death (that come about as a result of a threat to an important psychological need triggered by and further influenced by interactions within the organisation).

Section 5.2.8.6 Fear of Ostracism – influencer) and sections 1, 3 and 4 of the Model of misfit cognition and affective processes refer to this powerful state of social death. These feelings are shaped by subconscious cognition processes (model, section 2) and predispositions and needs as shown at internal influencers (model, section 5) and discussed within chapter 5 in the context of the emergent

Points of theory

The above finding and contribution also leads towards answering Research Question 1 What are the reasons behind organisational members’ feelings of misfit?

6.3.2 Finding 2 and contribution

Misfit is an automatic felt deep emotion brought on by a connection to a past experience or belief and transcends objective rationale.
Some respondents to the fora are, unprompted, talking about their upset feelings from previous work and social experiences being repeated in current work interactions; along with the fear of it happening again. Indicative of the premise that they have thought deeply about what has served to bring about the feelings of misfit that they have, and to ruminate on their part and influence from the perspective of (a mature) interdependence with others (Basinger, & Fuller, 1992) as it appears, to cohere with:

“Perception can never be emotionally neutral because it is informed by the often conflicted and divided voices that evaluate us, and the action stemming from this is motivated by highly personal emotional stances taken toward things, toward others, and toward one's own self that centers on the “field of perception.” (Burkitt, 2013:267)

The message coming through the data however is that there is a ‘self-fulfilling' prophecy replayed as the state of cognitive primacy (section 2 in the model) towards a confirmation of a misfit experience:

It's been the story of my life...always the outsider.

The isolation and devastation of feeling like you are the only one who doesn't belong or fit in can overshadow all else in one's life. It can become a repetitive self-fulfilling process -- a pervasive experience of wanting to be on the inside,

“I remember feeling trapped in this position in high school. The "in crowd" seemed to really be having a fabulous time. I watched from the periphery wondering what was wrong with me that I didn't authentically want to be doing what they were doing and why didn't it
matter to them whether I was part of the group or not. I wanted the fun they were having,

“I’m always the kid, my nose pressed against the window, looking at everyone inside having a good time.” “I didn’t belong in my family, so why should I feel like I belong anywhere else.” “I may be included but I never really feel like I belong.”

The narratives above are examples of several that told the same message – the individual isn't good enough for inclusion into the inner circle, based on their previous life experiences and subconsciously it seems brought forward to overlay current situations. The inputs to these are shown in the model at section 5) internal influencers and based on discussions in Chapter 5, Points of theory and to research question 1.

6.3.3 Finding 3 and contribution

Misfit can be rationalised or amplified (cognitive interpretation) at a conscious level within the context of internal and external influencers.

The most potent influence within an organisation is taken by scholars to be that of its organisational culture so labelled by authors in the popular press and media, as corporate culture (Chuang et al., 2004; Koskosas, Siomos, Fa, & Pharmaceuticals, 2011). Some cultures are so strong that they identify and brand the organisation itself (Wall Street stockbrokers, greedy Bankers, egotistical IBM), and that which drives its economic performance over the long-term. The same culture, however, is not always demonstrated within the organisation once a recruit begins their employ at which point a sense of misfit might occur, or the expected culture isn't still the same throughout the firm, say varying from department to department.
Additional new inputs to misfit knowledge from the data in this study shows that there appear to be five influential internal influencers coming through from the data. One of them, identity, has been touched upon in fit literature as a proposition (Resick, Giberson, Dickson, Wynne, & Badjo, 2013), but as far as it is known, this is the first time that an empirical study presents them as personal level influencers to such an extent for misfit.

1. Need of fit to the group (Tajfel, 1978)
2. Need of belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995)
3. Need for social inclusion and identity (Tajfel, 1978)
5. Fear of ostracism (Williams & Sommer, 1997)

All the needs are not, as has been discussed in the literature, separate and mutually exclusive. They have fuzzy boundaries but are regarded as unique and important particularly when in connection to ostracism (Williams, 2007). The respondents’ immediate reaction to threats to their needs as above have been expressed as pain, hurt, anxiety, stress, physical and mental illness, all of which are well documented in the ostracism literature. Similarly, with the external influencers presented, these are new to misfit research, and they are shown as having reciprocity to the extent that the last stage of cognitive processing can be one of three mental states. Fit, misfit as a new, first time experience, or misfit as a replay of previous life experiences – is another new contribution. Moving on to another (new) stage that of a second stage cognisance, where the effects to self and the organisation are better understood. This is presented through a Venn diagram within the Model of misfit cognition and affective processes. Through this diagram, representation of person and organisational factors are given -
because there are always interactions taking place between the individual and people within the organisations. There are few 'hard' effects that come through. Thus, it can be argued that there is no unilateral cause and effect.

The model also presents a useful contribution to knowledge around Schneider's (1987) ASA model. According to the results of this study, in the third stage of attrition people who misfit do not necessarily leave. They may do if they can find another job, failing that the misfit will stay within the organisation with an array of coping behaviours (research question 3), none of which may be identified as directly counterproductive, more of a low-level rumbling that has the possibility of escalating into something more serious. For the first time in misfit research, I have also presented knowledge about what the misfits who have talked about their state, said about the ways they cope with their misfit perceptions which I proffer is a useful contribution to PE fit research.

6.3.4 Contributions to the literature

Fit scholars have to date only an inkling of what makes up an affective state of misfit, which up to now has been considered to be points of incongruence on quantitative fit measures. This study answers the call to provide an understanding of how people not only experience misfit, the effects upon self and others in the organisation but as to how that cognitive construction comes about (Billsberry, Talbot, & Ambrosini, 2013; Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). This is provided through the new findings that have also come out of the study which have been discussed above.

We know that people's sense of physiological and psychological well-being going down to the intimate level of social identity comes from positive social interactions, particularly if connected to the ‘in-group’ and especially important
This study contributes to knowledge of misfit on a number of fronts beyond answering the research questions, which are new contributions in themselves, because they offer insight into the psychological construct of misfit from a subset of people who have expressed voice in respect of this topic. I have found that a felt state of misfit is akin to the psychological state of social death, (Nezlek, Wesselmann, Wheeler, & Williams, 2012) where people feel at the nadir of uselessness, with no meaning to their life and the emotional and psychological pain is extreme.

One of the most important part of contributions coming out of this study, however, are the three findings, around the capture of people's emotions and subsequent thinking about their misfit, not only in the ‘here and now’ of reality and out of discussions about interactions with identified types of others, but of the influences coming from their past and painful experiences. This has given valuable insights into how misfit perceptions have been constructed from a state of affective and cognitive primacy. From those comprehensions, I have been able to offer those two stages to the misfit cognition process, another and new addition to misfit knowledge.

6.4 Implications and contributions to practice

Human resource practitioners know about the need to recruit people who are not only suitable for the job but are likely to fit in with the work environment, chiefly where there are group/teams involved for deliverables. If persons have been hired to match a skill set for which there is not a high supply, then to obtain a level of job engagement rather than just job satisfaction (Warr & Inceoglu, 2012) induction is necessary. To mitigate any feelings of misfit within the employee, a socialisation process through induction is useful, if not essential,
especially when recruiting senior people (Blenkinsopp & Zdunczyk, 2005). This action could also go towards balancing out a person's supplies-values fit and getting them on-board within the organisation (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, et al., 2005). Human Resource practitioners are also interested in keeping costs down when connected to turnover be it in the sense of presenteeism, absenteeism or exit. Short or impaired tenure impacts also on job satisfaction, effective teamwork and creativity (Autry & Wheeler, 2005; Wheeler et al., 2007). Organisations therefore seek, select and socialise new employees who will fit, perform and stay long in tenure, and through caring human resource practice need to look at the ‘holistic’ individual to identify any elements of misfit that might arise for them.

Further implications for practice is that people join organisations on the premise that they will fit. Once in post, some find that the role that they were ‘sold’, expected and assumed (Blenkinsopp & Zdunczyk, 2005; Vogel et al., 2016) did not match up to the reality of what is actually going on. The people here have found themselves ignored at best, ostracised at worst. That threatens psychological needs (belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence) which I discussed at 6.2.2 and these unleash a variety of physiological, affective, cognitive, and behavioural responses (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004; Williams & Nida, 2011) discussed at 6.2.3. If not addressed, then the ‘misfit' employee, is likely to reach the nadir of social death and the alienation, helplessness, and depression that goes with it which impact upon individual health, productivity and co-worker interaction.

Through this study I have found that a person’s sense of misfit comes through into their consciousness from their perceived misfit or perceptions of
ostracism and could well be part of a new or continuing harmful affect and depressive states. It may even add to them, which is a severe issue in the context of employee wellbeing and falls therefore within an organisations contribution and duty towards creating a healthy and holistic environment for its employees, notwithstanding the aspect of whether it is good for the ‘bottom line’ or whether it is the right thing to do. Mental and emotional health problems in the workplace are on the increase in the UK, with the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development and the UK government through the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Adviser, Department of Health, UK stating that “Mental illness is the largest single cause of disability and represents 28% of the national disease burden in the UK. It is the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK, accounting for 70 million sick days in 2007. Mental illness costs the UK economy £70–£100 billion per year; 4.5% of Gross Domestic Product” (Cheese, 2016; Davies, 2013). The total costs of common mental disorders (absenteeism, presenteeism and turnover) may be £26 billion (Gilbody, Bower, & Rick, 2012) with the UK Work Foundation estimating that mental ill health costs the UK economy £70 billion each year (ACAS, 2017). A sense of misfit appears to come from ostracism, perceived or otherwise, and is looking to be a psychopathology, possibly, a depressive order. Because of ostracism, the exclusion by common consent (the group or referent others) or social acceptance, is universal in its aversive and deleterious effects, with, as already mentioned, the neural processes underlying that rejection similar to those involved in physical pain (Baumeister & Bushman, 2008; Williams, 2007).

The psychological and emotional outcomes picked up here fall under the umbrella of Mental Health, a subject that is receiving increasing media attention
in the UK and USA because one in four people will at some point in their lives suffer from a mental problem (J. Edwards, 2015; Hellebuyck, Nguyen, Halphern, Fritze, & Kennedy, 2017). Indeed, one of the eight workplace causes for poor mental health in the UK is cited as poor relationships with management and/or work colleagues (ACAS, 2017:6). In the USA, there is a problem too in workplace poor mental health, for example, in the Workplace Health Survey of 17,140 responses in 21 months (June 1, 2015-March 1, 2017) “Thirty-five percent of respondents noted that they “Always or Often” were isolated by a hostile or unhelpful workplace”

These situations call for a sense of understanding from someone in an organisation to support a ‘sufferer’ for finding the best way forward to satisfy the individual and positive valence to organisational goals. In so doing it would go towards meeting an employer's duty of care from a mental health perspective and input beneficially towards a Corporate Social Responsibility role within society. However, to be most effective would need to be driven by the HRM function after getting strategic buy-in (Jamali, El Dirani, & Harwood, 2015). That could include providing social support to reduce a person’s social pain, simply by putting them within a different group of caring colleagues for a while. The organisation could actively support an employee in crafting their job and surroundings, including placement with or without co-workers in order to improve the experience of work (Vogel, et. al, 2016), or, to offer workplace counselling to an employee (an intervention that is: (a) voluntarily chosen by the client; (b) responsive to the individual needs of the client or group; and (c) primarily intended to bring about change in an area of psychological/behavioural functioning) an approach that seems to have a high (80%) success rate (McLeod,
2010). Such a service helps a person to muster their own (and revised) thinking and emotional approaches necessary to establish a more functional reflexive-reflection cycle.

In the case of someone who appears to have a level of social anxiety disorder then counselling of the nature of the cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) kind, and/or sensitive signposting to a medical practitioner would be beneficial (De Castella et al., 2015). All these actions could be put in place in order to develop in someone with social anxiety a positive rather than a negative way of thinking, a problem that as a disorder affects approximately 15 million Americans (Kessler, Chiu, Demler, & Walters, 2005). It goes without saying therefore that to address anxiety issues especially those that are occurring in the workplace is a responsibility of a caring employer.

Managers of a group can play a key role in misfit perceptions, both through their own and their team’s action and inaction. For example, a person may experience misfit coming from an act of ostracism - such as not being invited to the office party - when their colleagues might not have a clue as to the devastating psychological effect it has had on the excluded person. Managers need also to be aware of the importance of social relations to people in their perceptions of misfit, particularly for new hires and through organisational change, and aim to provide supportive and well-structured work contexts. For misfit situations where they arise then they would do well to facilitate helping someone on the path to social inclusion (Williams & Nida, 2011) and once done, the individual’s need for belonging and self-esteem will direct their efforts towards re-inclusion. Taken as a whole, there is substantial evidence that after being ostracized individuals will attempt to pay more attention to others, and to
ingratiate themselves into others’ favour. These behaviours serve therefore to improve everyone’s level of belonging and self-esteem (Williams, 2007:241).

6.5 Strengths and limitations

This was a pioneering PE fit study utilizing a novel idiographic approach towards discovering the richness of individuals’ thoughts and attitudes and then to explore how they are formed and reformed within discussions taking place on internet discussion fora. Such an approach has to date generally been used in marketing studies. The use of social media represents a new tool in fit and misfit research in that freely expressed opinion has been captured where in the normal circumstance of qualitative study such people might not have come forward for interview, and thus their voices not heard. The use of netnography allowed the capture of 55 discussion fora where people are openly talking about their misfit uninfluenced by researchers’ questions in an interview situation or through questionnaires: they are therefore providing unprompted speech and thoughts. Another and valuable input is the presentation and analysis of several people's opinion about a subject, a circumstance generally available only in focus groups or through lengthy and time-consuming ethnographic study, which do not appear to have been used in empirical PE fit studies.

This study offers a new input to fit and misfit research with its methodology and methods. I have used a constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology and the inductive, qualitative approach is something that has been commented upon by fit researchers as lacking in the field. What also makes this study different from other qualitative ones, apart from the use of netnography, is that through the vehicle of discussion fora on social media an array of viewpoints is presented that do not necessarily agree with the initial poster and their self-reinforcing thoughts.
around a sense of poor fit or misfit. Such dialogue provides an offer of support and reality checks from others in the misfit's social media circle to ameliorate negative feelings, inspiring the original poster to try again and with a different mind-set. The online exchange of views and solutions is akin to cognitive behaviour therapy which seeks to reframe people's negative thoughts into positive ones and overcome selective information-processing biases.

Although this research study has achieved its aims and more, there were some limitations. However, these are interesting in themselves and open up many new avenues for future research. Firstly, I have data from unknown sources, from discussants without the usual information about interviewees such as age, gender, occupation, job, geographical location, and that they probably just represent people expressing voice, so only potentially a small glimpse into the world of misfit. This is a restriction that in future studies I would like to overcome and to enter closed group fora where perhaps hidden misfits are within.

Secondly, the coding was done by only one person. A team of experienced coders outside of the fit discipline would have been valuable to subject transcripts to independent validation. The data did not allow for the categorisation of the participants’ expressed interactions to offer sufficient discussion on internal and external influencers to categorise them into mediators and moderators with any confidence. They are left as influencers for the internal aspects because investigation of additional data would be needed to determine mediators. Similarly, for the external factors, they influence the nature of relationships, but not enough is known about how they might change the strength and therefore categorise them as moderators.
The sources used were solely in English and although they are from different countries, they are not truly international or trans-national. Therefore, no comparison could be made from other European and Asian aspect to determine if there were differences across cultures. I was only able to use data from websites that had no restrictions to its use within the public domain (see Ethics section - 3.17). There is no simple approach to what causes misfit because the cognitive affective state is made up of the interaction of numerous dimensions both external (the organisation, systems, processes and co-workers) with perceptions of the employee which sometimes may be influenced by past experiences so, in order to extend research in the field larger sample sets would be an advantage as well as the opportunity for in depth interviews with hidden misfits. That brings to the fore another limitation – where to find the misfits. It may well be that there are closed fora that I could join, but my presence as a researcher could very well hinder free expression. Another approach might be to contact people who were using recruitment agencies looking for new jobs, to ask them why they had left the last one.

6.6 Suggestions for future research

I would like to test the Model of misfit cognition and affective processes by talking with people in a one-to-one situation to explore the influences from that model to their perceptions around their initial perceptions of misfit and their journey through the stages that inform their final decision and actions. If participant permission could be obtained I could explore relational demographics and the psychological underpinning to perceptions of misfit, to identify whether there were any particular and common variables that lead people to perceive that they misfit; and to examine the psychological frame of reference that supports
that feeling, to test the Such an approach, however, would require of me some more psychology training and consideration around ethnographic observations - subjectivity and bias.

6.7 Concluding remarks

I started this research into misfit seeking to understand what it was like for those who were experiencing misfit at work because of the notion it was psychologically damaging, and with unknown, possibly serious outcomes. Moreover, the PE fit literature contained repeated calls for research into misfit and some theoretical suggestions as to its form, from an inside–outside perspective rather than from the approach in fit studies that uses pre-determined, albeit multi-dimensions of the person and the organisational environment in an outside–inside approach. That required an understanding as to what variables and interactions went towards people’s misfit perceptions, and through a grounded theory methodology approach I have been able to present a view of what they appear to be. During the study, as themes emerged, I linked them to the literature, where I identified Billsberry and De Cooman’s (2010) definition of misfit as best resonating, in part, with what my sub-set of misfits were expressing:

“Misfit as a psychopathology - “that is an enduring and negative state of mind. It stays with and afflicts 'sufferers' both inside and outside of the environment in which they perceive themselves as misfits”.

My completed study, however, indicates that there are specific factors through interactions at work, and under specific internal influences, that can lead individuals into a psychological sense of misfit and that the state is emotionally and psychologically painful, coming as it does from a perception of ostracism.
This coheres with Billsberry and De Cooman’s (2010:2) proposition that misfit “is persistent, unwanted, unpleasant, and something that they would rather not be”. I have been able to expand on that definition thus:

Misfit is a negative psychological state which comes about as a result of a perceived threat to self-worth and identity triggered by ostracism within work groups which may be ameliorated with input from referent others.


References


309


Mischel, W. (1973). Toward a cognitive social learning reconceptualization of


Ostroff, C. (2007c). My first foray into P-E was more than 20 years ago when I started my dissertation research. In 3rd Global e-Fit Conference (pp. 1–6). 1st Global e-Conference on Fit: Open University.


Organizational Culture Profile.


Sekiguchi, T. (2007). A contingency perspective of the importance of PJ fit and PO fit

330


Wheeler, A. R. (2010b). Which of These is not Like the Others? PE fit, Lack of PE Fit, and Misfit. In *4th Global e-Conference on Fit* (pp. 1–6).

Wheeler, A. R. (2010c). Which of These is not Like the Others? PE fit, Lack of PE Fit, and Misfit. In *4th Global e-Conference on Fit* (pp. 1–6).


system. In K. D. Williams, J. P. Forgas, & W. von Hippels (Eds.), Sydney Symposium of Social Psychology series. The social outcast: Ostracism, social exclusion, rejection, and bullying (pp. 19–34). New York, NY US.


Appendices
# Node Structure

**Misfit project 031014**

**04/06/2015 13:07**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hierarchical Name</th>
<th>Nickname</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Node</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Nodes - cases - interviews

- BEECH John
- DENBIGH David
- JEWELL Steve

## Nodes - cases - online discussion forums

- (1) Twitter ~ Search - misfit at work
- [INFJ] Feeling like I don’t fit in at work.
- Already feel like an outcast at my new job - Social Anxiety Forum
- Always going to be the outsider… - Social Skills and Making Friends
- Anyone else ‘friendless’ at work? Or feel like they don’t fit in?
- BBC - Search results for misfit
- Can anyone tell me why I always feel like the outcast?
- Cannot Connect ~ I Feel Like a Social Misfit Story & Experience
- Confessions of a Corporate Misfit ~ The Skool of Life
- Cultural Fit~ Are You Out of Place @ Your Work Place~ - Biocareers
- Disqus Comments
- Do You Ever Feel Like You Don’t Belong~ - SparkPeople
- Feeling depressed about being treated like an outcast at work~
- Feeling like an outcast at work~ - Social Anxiety Forum
- Find Jobs~ Search millions of jobs now ~ Monster.ca
- Help! I’m an Outcast in the Office
- Help! I’m an outsider at work ~ Bayt.com Blog
- How to cope with feeling “outside” company - social awkward outsider ~ Ask MetaFilter
- How to fit in at a new job ~ Life and Work ~ Embrace Life ~ Best Health
- how to fit into office culture during an internship ... when you’ve been disinvited from the staff retreat — Ask a Manager
- How to Tell If a Company Culture Will be a Bad Fit - US News
Name of applicant: Brenda Hollyoak.


Research project title: What are the characteristics and effects of organisational misfit? A grounded theory study of Western World based employees.

Comments by the reviewer:

1. Evaluation of the ethics of the proposal:
   The issues raised in the previous review process have been clarified and addressed through new attachment. The explanations provided are satisfactory.

2. Evaluation of the participant information sheet and consent form:
   The issues raised in the previous review process have been clarified and addressed through new attachment. The explanations provided are satisfactory.

3. Recommendation:
   (Please indicate as appropriate and advise on any conditions. If there any conditions, the applicant resubmit his/her application and this will be sent to the same reviewer).

   X  Approved - no conditions attached
   
   Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)

   Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary

   Not required

Name of reviewer: Anonymous.

Date: 08/01/2015.
Name of applicant: Brenda Hollyoak..........

Faculty/School/Department: [Business, Environment and Society] Strategy and Applied Management............................................

Research project title: What are the characteristics of organisational misfit and to what extent do these affect the misfit, the organisation and other employees? A grounded theory study

Comments by the reviewer

1. Evaluation of the ethics of the proposal:

2. Evaluation of the participant information sheet and consent form:
3. **Recommendation:**

(Please indicate as appropriate and advise on any conditions. If there are any conditions, the applicant will be required to resubmit his/her application and this will be sent to the same reviewer).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>X</th>
<th>Approved - no conditions attached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-submit application)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Name of reviewer: Anonymous

Date: 22/11/2013
REGISTRY RESEARCH UNIT
ETHICS REVIEW FEEDBACK FORM
(Review feedback should be completed within 10 working days)

Name of applicant: Brenda Hollyoak..............................

Faculty/School/Department: [Business, Environment and Society] BES Strategy and Applied Management ..............................................................

Research project title: A narrative study of organizational misfit

Comments by the reviewer

1. Evaluation of the ethics of the proposal:
   This is fine

2. Evaluation of the participant information sheet and consent form:
   This is fine

3. Recommendation:
   (Please indicate as appropriate and advise on any conditions. If there any conditions, the applicant will be required to resubmit his/her application and this will be sent to the same reviewer).
   - [X] Approved - no conditions attached
   - Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)
   - Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-
   - Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary
   - Not required

Name of reviewer: Anonymous..............................................................

Date: 04/10/2011........................................................................................................